

MARIA HOUSE

+ PROJECT +

A Community of Hope & Healing



Fr. Pete

Newsletter - August 2024

Maria House Project

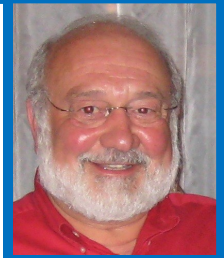
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Joe Tarquinio

A few months ago, Art Lynch, one of MHP's volunteers, brought this picture to Bible Study. To me, the picture said "more than a thousand words". As I looked at Elizabeth's and Mary's faces, I saw the joy and peace that one feels when they believe they are doing God's will.

As I studied the picture, I was reminded of two times in my life when I felt that I was doing what God had planned for me. However, later I became aware that Our Lord had different plans for me. The timing for the changes were inconvenient and I resisted at first. After much prayer and discernment, I realized that God's plan was the perfect plan for me, and when I accepted it, I felt contentment and peace again.

The first time occurred when I was receiving spiritual direction from Father Pete while in the seminary. During my sixth year, I realized that I didn't have a vocation to the priesthood but Our Lord wanted me to serve His people in some other capacity.

The second time I felt content and peaceful started in 1969. During the next 31 years, I really felt that I was fulfilling God's plan for me as I worked at Harborcreek Youth Services (HYS). I had the privilege of working with many talented and mission-driven staff. We brought hope and love to thousands of disadvantaged juveniles. HYS was my Camelot. Then in 2000, as I was driving with Father Pete back from Rockview Penitentiary, he said that he was praying and believed that Our Lord wanted me to come to MHP. I reluctantly listened to Father and gave him a number of excuses why I did not agree with him, and besides "the timing was not good for me." Father said "pray about it" and reminded me that I should not ignore God's calling.

After much prayer and discernment I realized that Father Pete was right and resigned from HYS and joined the MHP community. The peace and contentment returned and I have never regretted accepting God's new plan.

Like Mary and Elizabeth, in the picture, there is much joy and laughter in my life because I believe I have been fulfilling what God expects of me. I have the privilege of watching miracles occur in our residents lives when they realize God's plan for them. I am honored to be part of MHP's healing community.

God's timing has not been perfect for me. However, as Sammy (a past resident) would say, "God's timing is not our timing but He is always on time."

I know that most of you understand what I'm saying about how I feel, because you too have accepted Our Lord's plan. May peace and joy continue in your life!

Joe Tarquinio - Executive Director



“Thy Will Be Done”

Sandi Matts - Vice President

In the two years that Dave Sullivan has been with Maria House, he has learned to love the Lord with his whole heart and soul. He said, "I talk with God now, every day, all day, and I ask Him each morning to make me a better person than I was yesterday."



Dave Sullivan & Joe Tarquinio

It wasn't always that way. Before finding himself at Maria House, Dave was a lost man. He vividly recalls looking for a place to sleep each night, whether in an abandoned building, his truck, or under a bridge, and finding scraps to eat, sometimes going days without food. For almost seven years, survival on the street and addiction controlled his every move, beginning with alcohol, then drugs, and onto harder drugs. Partying and getting high were fully on his mind and life was terrible! He described himself as dysfunctional.

Dave reminisced about his life before his addiction. He said he had a wonderful family who loved him, describing his life as an "easy life". He had everything he could have ever wanted: a great Mom and Dad who loved him and took care of his every need; he

was married and had a wife, two beautiful daughters, his own home and had a notable career working for his Dad's company. Again, he had it all, but one thing had changed; pressure had increased and life was no longer "easy". Eventually, his marriage ended in divorce leading to his downward spiral.

Drugs, rehab, drugs, jail, rehab... this pattern led to total despair and eventually the prayer that changed his life. "God, I want so badly to stop but I don't know how; please take me home with you or I need a Miracle." What Dave didn't know was that while he sat in jail, desperate and trying to connect with a God he genuinely wanted to know, his Mom was home praying, "God, please save my son."

The "Miracle" happened in May of 2022 as Dave faced a federal judge who ordered him to rehab at Pyramid Healthcare for twenty-eight days, followed by house arrest with 24/7 supervision. This was to take place at none other than Maria House Project, while he awaited (and still awaits) federal sentencing.

Through Maria House, Dave now understands that God is a God of love: he has found a community of fellow believers who support and love him 24/7; he has learned to love himself and has restored his relationships with God and his parents; he has returned to working for his Dad and has a better bond with him than ever. They start each day by checking in on one another and sharing positive affirmations: he also calls his Mom daily, to say, "I love you, Mom." Gratitude is now at the forefront of his ongoing thoughts. Dave is very appreciative of second chances with his oldest daughter who prayerfully came back into his life. He gives thanks for the federal judge who placed him at Maria House, where the miracle both he and his Mom prayed for, is unfolding day by day.

As Dave continues to pray for his youngest daughter, and awaits his federal sentencing, he practices living by the words of both Mark and Luke, "Not my will but yours be done." He said "I am learning to stay out of my own way and to trust in God's timing. I can't wait to see what God has in store."

After approximately two years with Maria House, Dave currently resides at the Tenth Street location. In addition to meetings, Bible studies, and Leisure in the Spirit, Dave finds his sessions with his therapist Bobbie Cullers, his drug and alcohol counselor George Dowd, and his mentor/friend Dale Anderson, to be life-changing. Dale, the manager at Tenth Street said, "I hold Dave in high regard. When it comes to recovery, self-improvement, and spiritual growth, he is an All-star and equally encouraging for myself and the Maria House Community."

Dave finished the interview by saying, "God does great things when you take the time to listen, He has enriched my life!" Dave looks forward to working hand in hand with God to make change in our world. For all who know him, you recognize that he does that each time he greets you with his warm, beautiful smile, a smile that says, "I love my life... I am so very happy... Life is "easy"... I am responsible... God is so very good to me... Thy will



Sandi Matts



ERIE GIVES 2024

New Logo...

New Hours...

Same Inspiring Generosity!

The entire MHP family thanks you for your incredible generosity in the 2023 campaign. Together we raised over \$123,000 including the 5.8% prorated match...a NEW record!



This year Erie Gives is Tuesday, August 13 and the Erie Gives website (www.eriegives.org) will be open from midnight to midnight for online donations of \$25 or more using a credit card.

The Maria House office (NEW location: 130 West 19th St.) will be open from 8AM to 8PM to drop off your gift, or call us and we'll process your donation if you don't have access to a computer or credit card.

To maximize your donation and *eliminate any fees*, you can mail your check made payable to Maria House Project by

Friday, August 9th to:

Maria House Project

P.O. Box 10682

Erie, PA 16514



"I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you"... Philippians 1:3-4

MARIA HOUSE PROJECT CELEBRATES THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF JOE TARQUINIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Bob Boeh

They call him “Papa Joe.” They say, under his leadership and the spiritual direction provided by Maria House Project, their lives have been saved. For many, he is the father that they never knew. He lovingly refers to them as “my men.”

For 25 years, Joe Tarquinio has been loved and respected by the community at large as well as by every one of the Maria House Project family. We have been abundantly blessed to have Joe as our Executive Director. Over the years, thousands of men’s lives have been profoundly touched thanks to the talents of Joe, his highly capable staff and the intervention of the ever present Holy Spirit. Miraculous results have occurred in the lives of countless men as a result.

As you may know, Joe was chosen by Father Pete to join Maria House Project 25 years ago. Father undoubtedly prayed intensely yet patiently for God to send the right person to join him in his beloved Maria House Project mission. Prayers were answered when God sent Joe. Father Pete would call it providential. I would agree!

On behalf of the entire Maria House Project family we say, **“Thank You and Happy Blessed 25th Anniversary, Joe!”**

Recently our Board of Directors recognized Joe’s anniversary at a dinner in his honor where a bronze plaque was commissioned and awarded to him. It will be blessed and permanently mounted in the Lodge to recognize Joe’s exemplary service to his men and our God. Please continue to bless Joe, his men and the entire Maria House family with your prayers. We thank Joe for preserving, strengthening and carrying on the Maria House Project mission.

Maria House was born out of Father Pete’s love, vision and dedication to those who were forgotten, hopeless and in need of healing. He taught us that we are all children of God, no matter what our current circumstance might be. We are each charged to care for our brothers in their time of need. Without your continued prayers and contributions, Maria House Project will not be able to continue!

Erie Gives Day, Tuesday, August 13, 2024 is rapidly approaching. We really need your support more than ever to continue our mission. We depend heavily on your prayers and generosity on Erie Gives Day since it is our primary source of funding. Without it, we simply cannot afford to continue. As you prayerfully reflect on your level of support, we would ask that you recall Fr. Peterson’s spiritual guidance when he reminded us to “Let God take you where He wants. Let Him work in you”. We are extremely grateful for your continued generosity in response to our needs.

Please refer to our Erie Gives ad in this newsletter for additional details and guidance. For those who prefer to drop off or mail a check to our office or those who do not have a credit card or computer, don’t hesitate to call the office for help (814-454-0891). We want to make your gift giving easy for you. By writing a check to Maria House Project rather than using your credit card, you can save the 5% + \$0.30 credit card processing fee as well as the 2.5% campaign management fee. That’s over 5% of your gift!

No matter how you prayerfully decide to make your Erie Gives Day gift, we are eternally grateful and Our Lord will never forget your care of your brothers as they heal at Maria House Project in their time of need!

God Bless!

Bob Boeh - Board President



WITH HEARTFELT GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION
FOR 25 YEARS OF LOVING SERVICE AND DEDICATION
TO THE MINISTRY AND MEN OF
MARIA HOUSE PROJECT.

WE HEREBY HONOR
JOSEPH TARQUINIO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WE LOVE YOU, PAPA JOE!

Introducing Our New Logo

Maria House Project has gone over 50 years without an official logo. We committed significant time and energy this past year to design something befitting the beautiful ministry Father Pete started in 1971.

Many on the Board love the iconic image of Mary in the fire, which was photographed by one of the men when we had a fire in the office at the Lodge in 2007. Thanks to some creative work by an anonymous graphic artist, we were generously provided with a beautiful rendition of the image below for our new logo.



The tag line was another area in which we spent much time in discussion and prayerfully sought guidance. One member said "I bet we can find something in Father's writings"... and that is exactly what happened. On page 147 of *More I Could Not Ask*, Father Pete wrote, "I knew what **we** were about was not only some controlling of addiction but a **healing** of memories and the nurturing of an interior **hope**..." We had it! Father Pete provided the essential elements for our tag line.

After the fire, which did not damage the Lodge and no one was hurt, Father Pete said to Joe, "I told you we are under Mary's protection." Therefore it is ideal that Mary adorn Maria House Project in a welcoming and guiding pose to those who wish to experience *A Community of Hope & Healing*.

A. Craig Frisina - Advancement Director

*A reprint of *The Spirit of Medjugorje* article on the Lodge fire is available: call or email the office for a copy*

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Genesis 1:24: “Then God said: “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal.” And so it happened.

As I approach my 8th year as Spiritual Director, I appreciate all the more the value of family and a shared purpose. Being of one mind, one body, and one goal is a powerful trinity.

For example, for 23 years our house cat, named Barney by Fr. Pete, has accompanied men on their journey to sobriety and a closer walk with the Lord. When Barney recently died, the men joined hands and offered a collective prayer at his burial. Barney, a creature of God, had touched many as the Lord had intended.



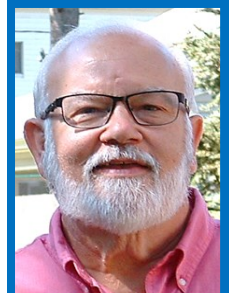
With the arrival of summer/fall we are reminded of the cycle of life that nature embodies. We, too, share those cyclic behaviors as we move through this life along the narrow path that leads to salvation. This is the reward for those who die to self.

MHP residents and volunteers remain active in the community. They have been present at Celebrate Recovery, Vigil of Hope and at many parish festivals. Their presence is a testimony to “giving back”, and every event they touch yields words of gratitude from the organizers.

We are preparing to hold another *Leisure in the Spirit Retreat* this fall. As Joe T. says, “This retreat is the mortar that holds our MHP family in prayer and thanksgiving.”

The Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Comforter, dwells deeply within our Maria House family. To God be all glory and praise as our men continue their walk with the Lord.

Deacon Joe Cicero - Spiritual Director, Chaplain



Deacon Joe Cicero



Thank you Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania!

The success of MHP’s program is based on spiritual development in conjunction with AA/NA’s 12 Step Program. Approximately 70% of the men who have graduated from the Maria House program have maintained their sobriety for over one year, as opposed to the national average of 20-30%.

Last October, Maria House received funding through a grant from the Catholic Social Ministry Endowment at the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania. Below Lisa Louis, Executive Director of the Catholic Foundation, presents a check for over \$6,300 to Bob Boeh, Board President, and Joe Tarquinio, Executive Director. This grant was used to expand the library with various resources aimed at decreasing substance dependence and increasing the resident’s spiritual development. The goal is to ensure sobriety and create a dynamic relationship between the resident and Our Lord.

The brotherhood that develops between these men reaffirms their human dignity, says Joe. Each member takes ownership of their obligation to help each other in their spiritual development and sobriety. Members do not judge others based on the past, but rather support each other regardless of what obstacles they are encountering. These materials help build spiritual growth, instill stronger community bonds and a sense of brotherhood through living, working and praying together.



Bob Boeh and Joe Tarquinio with Lisa Louis

Recently, I came across a difficult command from Jesus in Matthew 5:48, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." WHAT?! How is this possible? I thought, Jesus, we are to be "perfect" like God, like you? Typically, when I read something like this, I will immediately go to the internet and search a variety of commentators to get a better perspective on what Jesus meant. But in this case, I let it sit in the forefront of my mind and asked the Lord to help me understand how I, a sinner, could be perfect like our heavenly Father.

What transpired over the next few weeks was a beautiful series of revelations God shared with me through His word and other writings. The first instance came from Saint Paul in Colossians 3:12-14, where Paul instructs them, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven you so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection." I thought, wow, there's that "perfect" word again, along with some great instruction and characteristics from Paul, that we, as Christ followers, should exemplify.

Next, I happened upon another verse from Paul, this time he was writing to Galatia (5:13-14), "For you were called for freedom...But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love." He goes on to say how the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now there is no doubt who our "neighbors" are – these can include our friends, strangers, family members, and as Jesus tells us, in Matthew 5:44, even our enemies. At Maria House, our neighbors also include the precious men we serve. Father Peterson seemed to have a particular love for those living on the margins of society and consistently demonstrated boundless compassion.

God put in front of me other writings, which helped bring me closer to the answer I sought. One of those was from a Jesuit priest, Father Gregory Boyles, who wrote, *Tattoos on the Heart*. Two passages stood out to me - one is from a Buddhist nun, Pema Chödrön who speaks on compassion and suggested, "its truest measure lies not in our service of those on the margins, but in our willingness to see ourselves in kinship with them." Father Gregory goes on to write, "Compassion isn't just about feeling the pain of others, it's about bringing them in toward yourself. If we love what God loves, then, in compassion margins get erased." God revealed in Father Gregory's next line, more insights into the answer I had been seeking... "Be compassionate as God is compassionate." In essence, we should remove the barriers which exclude or separate us from our neighbor.

In the Gospel of John 15:17 Jesus commands us to love one another. Being compassionate and loving our neighbor, therefore is how we can be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect and, thankfully, it says nothing about being sinless as a prerequisite.

We have such a beautiful example of this perfection in Father Pete. He was a master at eliminating any 'marginal' barriers and compassionately connected with and served the men of Maria House.

Now, how do we do this? And how did Father Pete demonstrate this so effectively throughout his life and ministry? As I've grown in my faith, I know for sure, we don't do this on our own. It is through Christ and His Spirit, which lives in us, when we accept Him and let Him in. I've also come to know that God does not love us because we are good and without sin, rather as C.S. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*, "God will make us good because He loves us."



Craig Frisina

It's God's love and Spirit in us, which allows us to do the compassionate work He created us, and Father Peterson, to do. Finally, as Paul says in Galatians 5:22-23, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Friends, may we be encouraged, humbly living in the Spirit of Christ, and through His grace and guidance, strive to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Amen.

MARIA HOUSE PROJECT

P.O. Box 10682

Erie, PA 16514-0682



SAVE THE DATE

BINGO is BACK

Join us Sunday, September 29, 2024 at JPTF Events Center, 2319 West 38th Street in Erie, PA 16506

check our website (mariahouseproject.org) and JPT Foundation Facebook Bingo Page (jptfoundation.com) in September for details