

Triumph of the Heart

GO INTO THE WHOLE WORLD

Family of Mary

2015 (IV) / No. 74

*“Jesus will give us the joy
of being his disciples.”*

Pope Francis, April 28, 2013

Called to be Messengers of Faith

*Just before the Ascension, the Risen Lord
entrusted his Apostles a great missionary endeavor:*

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature!”

*The Apostles knew that they had been personally called by Jesus
and given the authority to testify to what they had heard and seen
from the Divine Master whatever the consequences.*

*Through this they, and many others who came after them,
became “fishers of men” who were able win over people of goodwill for Christ
through the power of the Holy Spirit
and the “Lord, who confirmed ... by granting signs and wonders to occur”.*

*I*n order for the proclamation of the Faith to reach Rome and “the ends of the earth,” however, Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, was called. In the Year of St. Paul 2008-2009, Pope Benedict XVI said, “*The Risen One spoke to Paul, called him to the apostolate and made him a true Apostle. For him, the truth that he experienced in his encounter with the Risen One was well worth the fight, persecution and suffering. But what most deeply motivated him was being loved by Jesus Christ and the de-*

sire to communicate this love to others. Paul was a man capable of loving and all of his actions and suffering can only be explained on the basis of this core sentiment. We see a commitment that can only be explained by a soul ... sustained by profound conviction; it is necessary to bring Christ’s light to the world, to proclaim the Gospel to all of us.” The Holy Father added, “*Even if the apostolate of Paul and the twelve is unrepeatable, the innermost core of the task remains, that we believers are*

also called to bring his light, his truth and his love to the others."

In every century of the Church's 2000-year history, countless men and women have proven themselves in different ways to be faithful messengers of the faith, some to the point of martyrdom. They all knew trials and suffering, yet few enjoyed seeing the fruitfulness of their apostolate. Besides, not everybody has the vocation to go from town to town or to mission in foreign lands. Take St. Philip Neri for example. Inflamed by the famous letters from the mission of St. Francis Xavier, the great Apostle of India and Japan, he also had a burning desire to go to the mission in India. Yet his inspired confessor told him clearly,

"Your India is Rome!" He obeyed, and so became the renowned "Apostle of Rome".

We are also reminded of one who proclaimed mercy in the twentieth century, Leopold Mandić, who, from childhood on, wanted to go to the Orient so that he, *"could work for the return of the oriental peoples to the Catholic Church."* Poor health made it impossible for him to go to the East as a missionary; his confessional in Padua, Italy became his "mission station" where he listened to confession for ten to fifteen hours a day for forty years. He willingly and repeatedly offered up the sacrifice of not being able to mission abroad for ecumenism and often said, *"My Orient is every soul seeking my priestly assistance."*

I will let roses rain down from heaven

*A*t first glance, you would not think that a contemplative sister in a convent could fulfill Jesus' command to mission to all the world. Yet the young Thérèse Martin shows us that it is indeed possible. At the age of fifteen, she entered the Carmelite cloister of Lisieux where she—without ever leaving the convent—found a way "to go into the whole world". The Lord showed her in prayer that we can make even the little difficulties and sacrifices of daily life into something immeasurably precious when we accept them out of love and offer them up to God. This Carmelite's "little way" has inspired and encouraged people to this

day to make a gift for those in the mission field through the little sacrifices of everyday life.

Through her life in the Carmel, filled with prayer and self-denial, Thérèse of Lisieux became the "Patroness of the World Missions" alongside St. Francis Xavier, and because of her writings, was recently named a Doctor of the Church. We are also reminded of one who proclaimed mercy in the twentieth century, Leopold Mandić, who, from childhood on, wanted to go to the Orient so that he, *"could work for the return of the oriental peoples to the Catholic Church."*

The lived gospel

*I*n the end, the gospel people ultimately "read" is our personal life. Don Dolindo Ruotolo, a priest and friend of St. Padre Pio, said: *"Jesus, how great is my responsibility! My faith must enlighten the people. In the world I want to be your Gospel which is written with my life."* That goes for us all, for a family mother as

much as for a politician, for a nurse as much as for a professional athlete.

Anybody, no matter what their daily routine is, can proclaim the Good News of our Redemption through a Christian Faith, which they live even without words and merely through a silent example.

The proclamation of the Faith can have a thousand different faces, and through the course of a single life, may take on many different forms. A classic example is Pope St. John Paul II. He courageously witnessed to his faith despite persecution as a young student, as an actor and then a simple laborer in a quarry, as a chaplain, a priest for families and a professor at the university. During his 26-year pontificate, Pope John Paul II became a convincing witness to the Gospel, the “Pope of the Century” and an “Apostle of Peace”, even for followers of other religions and confessions. He wrote 14 encyclicals and 56 apostolic letters. Moreover, by his 103 trips to 130 countries he undertook more journeys than all his predecessors together and traveling 153,520 miles flew

the equivalent of six times around the world. As his health deteriorated, the Pope discovered the “*Gospel of Suffering*”. Through his coredeeming suffering, through illness and pain, difficulties walking and speaking, the once so athletic pope became a thorn in the side of many who even called for his resignation.

A man of suffering, he became a consolation and a witness of hope at the threshold of the third millennium until this great apostle of the nations was able to give only silently the traditional “*Urbi et Orbi*” Easter blessing in 2005. Still this Marian pope left us a precious spiritual inheritance well beyond his death with his consecration to Mary, his “*Totus Tuus*”.

A New Start in the Homeland

Fr. Bonfilius Maria Wagner (1926-2005) invited our community to come to the Czech Republic where today we have the privilege of continuing the spiritual legacy he left behind. He entrusted to us there the Monastery of Mercy in Gratzen and the pilgrimage church Our Lady of Consolation in Brunnl (see Triumph of the Heart #44).

Franz Wagner (Fr. Bonfilius’ civil name) grew up with his younger brother Hans and his deeply religious parents on a small farm in southern Bohemia, in a little village called Jetzkobrunn. Although his father was a steward for Count Buquoy close by, the Wagners lived very modestly.

After kindergarten and elementary school, Franz attended a high school in the neighboring Austrian town of Gmund, since his mother language was German. He was obliged to help on the little farm, something he did not always like

to do. His mother Catherine would console him though by promising to make soon a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Consolation.

Franz was a happy child and a diligent student who did whatever he set out to do with his whole heart. From his childhood on, he had the desire to join the Servites in the nearby Monastery of Peter and Paul where he served as an altar boy whenever he could. He always wanted to become a priest, but they found themselves in the midst of war after German troops occupied Bohemia.

Protected by another Mother

Shortly after graduation, when Franz was only 17, he was drafted into the army, and in 1944, he was sent to the eastern front. As one of the few from his battalion who survived the fighting, he fled from the encroaching Russians and, three days before the end of the war, arrived with a fellow soldier in Gratzen, close to his home. German soldiers ordered them to draw the weapons out of a well in the town square. While they were doing this, the advancing Russian army captured all the other soldiers. It was a miracle that neither one of them was noticed and taken away as a Russian prisoner of war.

An extremely sorrowful period ensued for the local people. Those who were not forced to leave their homeland lived as citizens with limited rights, and so Franz was not allowed to go to college. In the fall of 1948, Mother Wagner died after a long illness. Fr. Bonifilius said of this event later, *“As she was lying on her death bed, she said to me and my brother, ‘Now you no lon-*

ger have a mother. Another Mother will have to take care of you!’ And we knew very well the she did not mean that our father should remarry but that the Mater Dolorosa, Our Lady of Sorrows, would now care for us. She did so and continues to do so.... My mother believed so deeply that Mary is always close to us, just like she was close to her son.”

The Communists came to power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. The remainder of the family—his father, grandmother, Franz and Hans—decided to secretly flee over the border into Austria. The Wagners first went to Vienna where 22-year-old Franz then kept his resolution to join the Servites, the Servants of Mary. Nevertheless, his superior soon sent him to the novitiate in Innsbruck where he finally studied theology and on July 25, 1953, two days before he turned 27, was ordained to the priesthood.

Between 1945 and 1947, as a reaction to German war crimes, the Czechoslovakian authorities drove out around three million German immigrants from their settlement areas in Bohemia and Moravia. Only about 250,000 were allowed to stay in the country with limited rights. To this day, a heavy shadow cast by the injustices committed and received by both sides looms over the relationship of these two nations. Fr. Bonifilius did everything he could to try and reconcile both sides. That is why the pilgrimage site of Our Lady of Consolation is all the more important today, because it is where Our Lady wants to console and unite all her children in a supernatural way.

The Pastor of Tyrol

As a chaplain in various Austrian parishes and during the 25 years (1965-1991) that Fr. Bonifilius was pastor and prior of the Servite monastery in Innsbruck, people treasured him as a genuine priest who drew from his deep trust in the goodness and mercy of God in order to be there

for the souls with all his strength and love. The weapons, which this religious man had with him always and everywhere, were his breviary and Rosary. For his blessed, untiring work he was awarded the Tyrolean Cross of Service and became known far and wide as the “Pastor of Tyrol”.

He was one of the first people you would encounter early in the morning on the streets of Innsbruck as he was hurrying along with his bike or on foot to visit the sick or homebound. A good friend testified, *“His calendar was full of appointments to visit the ill, administer the last rites or hear confession. Each visit was the most important one of his busy day, which was marked by prayer, patient listening and kind advice until sleep finally overcame him.”*

He was as much esteemed as a confessor, who often sat for hours in the confessional, as a

passionate preacher whose words brimmed with goodness and confidence but could also hit to the core when necessary. He said, *“I feel that I am responsible to one person alone—God and his truth!”*

You could feel his selfless love, which made the suffering of others his own and helped people without distinction. *“Always give people the love they need and not the love they deserve. The greater the crook or criminal, the more love they need—and the worst person needs the greatest love.”*

Fr. Bonfilius became the prefect of the young theology students at the Innsbruck monastery while he was still a deacon. They trusted him and said, “Finally, somebody to play soccer with us!” He not only enjoyed playing with them, but he was good—even in a habit!

Rebuilding stones and hearts

*I*n 1991, after the Iron Curtain fell, Fr. Bonfilius was at the height of his prosperous mission when God unexpectedly entrusted him with a great new responsibility. The Servite monastery in his homeland had been returned to his Order after years of terrible misuse as a border barracks for the Communists, and now it was to be rebuilt and filled with new life.

As hard as it was for him to go, Fr. Bonfilius understood that it was God’s will to leave behind his beloved Tyrol and all his spiritual children and, despite being 65, an age at which others think about living out the rest of their life in peace, he started all over again. He volunteered, and that September his superior sent him and three brothers back to his Bohemian homeland that, because of the Iron Curtain, he had not been able to visit for 43 years.

The challenges were enormous: the monastery was so dilapidated that it was practically uninhabitable. The Order could pay for only a part of the renovation, and they were also supposed to restore the churches and chapels of the five parishes belonging to the pastoral area and the pilgrimage church Our Lady of Consolation in Brunnl. So Fr. Bonfilius set out tirelessly to beg for financial aid from friends and other compatriots in Austria and Germany who had been driven out as well. More than anything else though, the spiritual desert in the hearts of the people there had to be resuscitated after forty years of communism—unfortunately the poor priest did not speak a word of Czech. He began learning this difficult language with great determination and in short time, despite the workload, picked up even some of the nuances of the language.

All the spiritual and material reconstruction came at the price of many interior sacrifices for Fr. Bonfilius. At one of his first Holy Masses after returning to the Czech Republic, he saw from the altar a person who had caused his family great suffering decades before when people were being driven out. “The inner fight to forgive him with all my heart was so strong that I would have rather gone right back to Innsbruck. However, I knew that God’s will could only be done here in the monastery ... if I take the first step now and offer mercy and forgiveness. ... After I had won the battle to forgive him, God rewarded me in the same moment with the gift of new strength to joyfully take charge in the nearly hopeless situation of renovating the monastery!”

He said jokingly, *“Czech is a nice language. It has (grammatically) seven cases, and I am the eighth.”* From the beginning, he decided to, *“at least greet everybody in Czech,”* and used a loud and sincere *“Pozdrav vás Pán Bůh!”*—*“May God greet you!”* This was the most effective way to remind people once again of God. Friendliness and sacrificial love were the wonderful keys used to reach their souls and give them new direction. An important group of his coworkers helped train teenagers who, like the children, always felt close to Fr. Bonifilius’ youthful, happy nature. *“We are all children,”* he said, *“and we are God’s children our whole life long; God likes us!”*

He nourished in his heart a special love for

the pastoral care at his dear pilgrim site Our Lady of Consolation, where growing numbers of pilgrims and visitors arrived from the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany. Thanks in part to their encounters with this Servite priest with such a strong Faith, they experienced the consoling, unifying and healing presence of Mary, the Mother of Consolation. In all his arduous new undertakings, the “servant of Mary” drew especially from prayer and from his unshakable trust in Our Lady’s intercession. There was much to learn from Fr. Bonifilius’ natural attitude. His humor and his gift to find something positive in all difficulties helped him to carry his own burdens and those of the others. Few people ever saw him sad or dejected.

The last Czech Servite

*F*r. Bonifilius’ trust was challenged anew in 2002, when the death of the last brother in the monastery left him alone, and the Order’s province no longer had any “reinforcements” to send. The holy priest would do anything for the souls entrusted to him, and although he was nearly 80 years old, he was often up until midnight. Even at the beginning of 2004, when he was diagnosed with lung and bone cancer and required more medical help and attention, he continued working tirelessly. At the same time, he prayed with

great confidence that the mission, which he had built, would continue. And the Lord rewarded the priest’s trust. At his recommendation and through the goodness of the superiors of the Servite province of Tyrol, they gave the now newly renovated St. Peter and Paul Monastery to our community, with whom Fr. Bonifilius had been friends for many years. In August 2005, the first missionaries of the Family of Mary arrived and also overtook the honor of caring for this most deserved priest. He was overjoyed!

The passive activity of a great missionary

*F*or the Mother of Sorrow’s “Good Son”—as his name translates—his bed had already become an altar from which he offered his great suffering to God. He turned down any pain killers in order to “stay alert”. *“What does it really mean to be sick or powerless?”* he asked once in a homily. *“He has no power; no strength. The world has no interest in someone*

who is sick because he cannot do anything. Yet when someone accepts and carries his illness in the name of the Lord, he is very useful for the kingdom of God in heaven and on earth.”

Nevertheless, it was not always easy for him, who had been so active during his life, to accept his increasing helplessness. Then one day he called in our missionaries to share something

very important with them. *“I have understood,”* he explained, *“that the time has come where my ‘Actio catholica’, my active work, has changed into ‘Passio catholica’, to suffering which I carry out of love. And I have understood that now, in this pain, illness and helplessness, I can work much more than in all the years in which I was so active.”*

Just three days before his death, he admin-

istered, with the bishop’s permission, the Sacrament of Confirmation to a young man. On October 11, 2005, Fr. Bonfiliius fell into a deep sleep from which he awoke early in the afternoon when Holy Mass was celebrated in his room. He was fully conscious as he received Holy Communion, and afterwards his “final battle” began. Looking towards the Blessed Sacrament, Fr. Bonfiliius gave his rich life back to God.

Holy Mass was celebrated in Fr. Bonfiliius’ room every day; it was moving how deeply he concelebrated from his bed. It did not matter whether somebody prayed the Joyful or the Glorious mysteries of the Rosary with him, he always meditated on the mystery of the Crucifixion.

Youth of Light

The picturesque village Pralong is located just south of Albi, France. Surrounded by pristine countryside, it is home to the international school for the evangelization of the youth “Jeunesse-Lumière”, “Youth of Light”.

Young people from all over the world come for a nine-month training in apostolate for their peers. The founder is Fr. Daniel-Ange, and he shares with us how God inspired him to start this work.

An early calling

Daniel-Ange de Maupeou was born in Brussels, Belgium on October 17, 1932. His devout parents—his mother was Belgian and his father French—gave their four boys a living Faith and taught them a sincere love for Jesus and Mary. Since their father served in the army, the family often moved, even outside the country. This allowed Daniel-Ange to encounter different mentalities early on, broadening his horizons and preparing him for his future task as a missionary for youth from all over the world. He finished his elementary education at a boarding school in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Since none of his siblings studied there with him, he

was very lonely and had a hard time learning. As a result, he had the lowest grade in all his classes. During World War II, his family moved from Belgium to France, close to Lourdes, then to Corsica and finally to Grenoble. Daniel-Ange spent his final years of education at a boarding school in England.

On July 13, 1946, when he had returned home after a long school year and his father had come back from the French colony Indochina, there was a great family celebration. Since this would become one of the most important days in Daniel-Ange’s life, we will let him tell us what took place:

“9:15 p.m.: To thank the Lord that we could all be together again, we gathered, as we did every evening, in the small, bright white chapel in our home which had been built like the house

in Ephesus where Mary completed her earthly pilgrimage. We were always convinced that Mary was present here in a special way. After we had prayed together, Dad said:

‘Jesus, we have said thank you for everything in our hearts. Speak now to us.’

Everyone was silent in order to listen to what the Lord had to say to each of us.

Unexpectedly I heard a voice in the depths of my soul.

It was strong and yet gentle, but very clear.

It was 9:33 p.m.:

‘Daniel-Ange, do you want to spend your life with me, to give me your whole life? To love me and help me save the world? Do you want to work with me?’

“*I* remember this moment as if it was yesterday, an overwhelming flash which lit up every moment of my life. It was inconceivable that God wanted to call me into his service, a shy teenager who did not even have good grades at school. I could not grasp that God was counting on me! I am important to the Creator! He did not reduce me to my mistakes.

“At the same time, I experienced complete freedom—God will respect my decision. He does not oppress anybody. He is one who truly loves, who gently sought to awake this love in me, but would never force it. Humbly, ardently hoping, he was awaiting the answer from me, a thirteen-year-old boy.

“The Almighty God is so different to how I had imagined him. I cried for hours. My parents thought that they had hurt me. *‘No, no, they are tears of joy. The Lord called me and I answered: Adsum—Here I am.’* ‘Adsum’ later became the motto of our community.

“*M*y mother reminded me that when I was five years old I had said, *‘I know what I’m going to be when I grow up, when I’m a man. I’m going to be God’s friend.’* On that evening, God became my friend. Dad read to me

the story from the Bible where little twelve-year-old Samuel responded to God’s call four times.

“He then led me out of the chapel, pointed to heaven and cited the prophet Baruch: *‘The sun and moon and stars are bright, and obedient in the service for which they are sent’* (6:59). Would I be less generous than a star?

“The voice that I obeyed was no illusion. The proof is that, from that day on, my life radically changed and that, to this day, I never doubted my vocation for a minute.

“*M*y dream of becoming an orchestra conductor in the summer and a ski champion in the winter quietly faded away. I met the Benedictines from Clervaux in Luxembourg at the age of sixteen. I was very impressed by the seventy monks who lived there. I wanted to join at once, but the abbot would not allow me because of my age.

“During a pilgrimage to Rome with my parents, I asked Pope Pius XII during an audience for permission to join the monastery immediately. Nevertheless, he referred me back to the abbot, telling me to obey and trust. Time seemed to stand still; I desired so much finally to become a monk.

“On March 30, 1950, at the age of seventeen, I was at last allowed to join the Benedictines of Clervaux. My mom brought me to the monastery. When she noticed a cross at the entrance, she said

to me, ‘*You were born for him.*’

I cried tears of joy the whole night through. I wanted to remain there the rest of my life. Yet everything would turn out quite differently.”

The Virgin of the Poor in Africa

“*T*he ancient monastic rule permitted that there be only one priest in the whole community to administer the Sacraments. All the others were simply monks. Two weeks after my arrival, I received my first habit. I could not stand it though because it was black; I just could not accustom myself to it. After a year and a half, I fell into such depression that I could neither eat nor sleep. So, the abbot sent me home and suggested that I study philosophy. I did as he suggested; and I lived at the seminary in Aix-en-Provence. I really missed the monastery though.

“Next came my year of mandatory military service, which I fulfilled doing civil service. It was during this time that a desire grew in me to found a little community of monks who would live in very modest conditions and silently cultivate the land.

“Together with four brothers from the former community, I started a hermitage close to Bordeaux according to the example of Bl. Charles de Foucauld’s community of brothers. We called our little community ‘*La Vierge des pauvres*’, ‘*The Virgin of the Poor*’.

“The Bishop of Bordeaux at the time was very impressed by our lifestyle and spoke highly of us. As a result, our abbot sent me to Africa, granting the request of the Bishop of Rwanda, to found a similar brotherhood with simple monastic life.

“I left France in 1958, at the age of twenty-six, with a heavy heart. Even so, I quickly fell in love with the Africans. We built a chapel dedicated to the Virgin of the Poor at an elevation of

6,500 feet; it became a place of prayer for all of Rwanda. I lived there with my heart and soul for twelve years. These joyful and open souls made such a deep impression on me.

“*A*t our chapter meeting in France in 1971, they decided not to let me return to Rwanda, reasoning, ‘*The Africans should be among their own.*’ That was a shock for me. Back in Europe, I felt like I was on another planet. So many young people who did not know what to do with their lives, who sought happiness in drugs, alcohol and sex, who even took their lives instead of choosing life—so much darkness! How was that possible?

“It took me months to get over this. It was at this time that, alongside my theological studies in Freiburg, Switzerland, I started writing my first book. I met the charismatic renewal through a French priest. At first, this style did not suit me at all; I was in love with silence. Yet during an evening prayer service on January 11, 1973, grace so deeply moved me and I experienced such a strong outpouring of the Holy Spirit that a fire began to burn in me that never went out.

“My confreres did not recognize me anymore. I, who by nature was so shy, went to the bars and spoke to young people about God. In the train, I showed other passengers my icon of the Holy Trinity and asked if they knew who that is. I had only one concern: How can I bring God’s love to the youth of our day?

Called from solitude to apostolate

“*I*n 1975, the prior of the charismatic community sent me to the mountains for three months to discern in silence what God wants of me. These three months turned into seven years. I had permission from the Bishop to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for adoration in my hermitage and to receive Holy Communion every day. I asked God day and night, ‘*What do you want from me? What should I do?*’

“*T*he growing love in me for the youth was unstoppable, especially for those living in a world of death and hopelessness. Slowly I received clarity—I should give up my withdrawn life and go out onto the streets, to speak to young people about God’s love. Following a time of exterior apostolate, I would withdraw again into a hermitage to be filled anew with this love through prayer.

“After my prior and the responsible bishop confirmed the authenticity of my call, I started my mission in 1981. The bishop suggested that for this responsibility I should be ordained a priest. I was to receive this invaluable gift from Pope John Paul II on Pentecost 1981. Yet when the day arrived, the Holy Father was still in the hospital following the assassination attempt. Instead, he had Cardinal Gantin perform the ordination as the

papal legate. In his message to the newly ordained priests, however, the pope let us know that he was offering up his wounds for us. My priesthood was born not only of the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but also of his servant Pope John Paul II.

“*I* was always fascinated with the liturgy. It is a place where heaven and earth touch. And now at the sound of my voice, Jesus would become living in the host. He is so humble to obey the priest. My experience is that nothing evangelizes better than a solemn Holy Mass because the angels and saints and all of heaven are present there. I wanted to illuminate the whole world with the light of his Eucharistic presence and to oppose death in all its forms with Jesus Christ, true Life.

“My mission bore much fruit, but I learned something very important—the best apostles for the youth are the youth themselves. Their testimony is the strongest because they are living in the same situation as those to whom they are speaking. Such missionaries need training though; they have to be genuine for their words to be convincing. Out of this experience came forth in 1984 Juenesse-Lumière, an international school to teach evangelization. It was approved by the Archbishop of Albi in 1994.”

Fr. Daniel-Ange’s greatest passion is Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. “To adore the living God and praise his love is the greatest thing anyone can do on earth. There is a responsibility then to go to work for this love—to save life where it is threatened, to protect love where it is emptied of its values, to offer up prayers where God is being pushed out, to bring God’s joy where it is buried.” These are the primary tasks, which Fr. Daniel-Ange considers extremely important, when one wants to go to work for the kingdom of God—and always in the Church, with Mary, the Mother of Life, and all the angels and saints.

*“For me, the Holy Eucharist is the heart of my heart, the life of my life.
If I want to carry him in procession, he makes himself available.
He also avails himself of me because my body and soul are consecrated to him.
I can no longer do what I want to do; I do what makes the Lord happy.
One says to the other, ‘I give myself to you with body and soul.
I offer myself to you; do with me whatever is pleasing to you!’
Those are not just empty words, not some theory.
‘Look to God that you may be radiant with joy’” (Psalm 34:6)*

**calls out Fr. Daniel-Ange to the youth.
And they can see in his face
that what he says is true.**

A school of prayer and life

*A*ctually, *Juennesse-Lumière* is above all a school of prayer and life. Young people between the ages of 18 and 30 from all over the world give the Lord nine months of their lives to pray intensely as a community, to train for evangelization among other young people and to learn to live as brothers and sisters according to the fundamentals of the Gospels.

Since one can convince others only of what one has experienced himself, the school is not firstly about knowledge but rather about experience—experience with God and experience with community life. For the time in which they live in the community, everybody decides for a celibacy out of love and a life of chastity. One sees in the other a brother or sister whom they can meet with respect and freedom. Through this, many young people experience healing and reach a mature ability to love, regardless of their calling in life.

*E*very three months, the bishop sends the young people to missions in different countries. For two weeks, they go to schools, prisons, orphanages or retirement homes to testify to their Faith. Even on the streets, they speak about their

joy of living with Jesus. The wealth that they have received, they bring in this way into the world.

*M*adine from Switzerland, who took a sabbatical year with *Juennesse-Lumière*, told us, *“These nine months have been the most beautiful time of my life. To live together with other young people, to pray together and have the same goal is something so wonderful. The prayer gave me a lot of love and deep peace, which I never want to lose. You can connect to the Lord so quickly there. It was heaven on earth for me.”*

Former participants, in the meantime, have founded similar schools according to the model of *Juennesse-Lumière*. In 2004, the first school with the name *“Children of Light”* was born in Lodz, Poland; close to Florence, Italy, Fr. Gianni Castorani founded the first Italian evangelization school *“Guards of Easter Morning”* and currently Fr. Cyril is preparing a foundation in Benin, Africa.

The Church and the world have one man to thank for all this, Daniel-Ange, who answered God’s call already as a child saying *ADSUM, here I am, Lord, send me!*

“For me, Daniel-Ange is a holy priest. His heart beats for us young people. He goes along with just about every joke and is so joyful. Above all, he always wants to lead us to the spring, to Jesus. I believe that no other words in Holy Scripture describe him better than, ‘unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.’ He continually repeats in prayer, ‘Jesus ... Jesus ... Jesus.’ I saw him praying for hours, even whole nights before the Blessed Sacrament. It seems like he never tires—and that at the age of 81! He would do anything to save souls,” said Nadine.

Since it was founded in 1984, nearly one thousand young people have given the Lord a year of their life and were formed in the school for evangelization Jeunesse-Lumière. Eighty-eight couples have met and married, thirty-four priests and deacons discovered their vocation in these years, fifty-five young people live today as a brother or sister in religious communities and fifteen seminarians are in training.

Open the Doors for Me

*Fr. Michel-Marie Zanotti-Sorkine, from southern France,
has drawn a lot of attention in his homeland.*

*In only a few years, he has succeeded in renewing his parish
in the middle of the port town Marseilles from the ground up.*

*He is an encouraging example that the New Evangelization
is possible today where it is now needed most—in the parish itself.*

It is enough to have a shepherd’s heart.

Michel-Marie Zanotti-Sorkine was born in Nice, France in 1959; his father was a policeman with Italian and Korean ancestors and his mother the daughter of a Russian emigrant. His parents were great role models for him. Although they did not practice the Faith, they lovingly raised him and his older brother teaching them to be very respectful and mature men and encouraged their Catholic faith life.

In Michel-Marie’s younger years, his pastor introduced him to the spirituality of the Salesians founded by Don Bosco; this formed him spiritually and laid the foundation for a great love for Mary. When he was only eight years old, he felt a calling to the priesthood. His mother died when he was thirteen. He preserved God’s calling deep

in his heart even, when at the age of twenty-one, he first opted for a career in music. Encouraged by famous songwriters, he went to Paris where, for eight years, he performed as a composer and singer in various cabarets and piano bars. It was a joyful time, but at the age of twenty-eight, strengthened by the advice of two priests, he finally gave up his career to become a priest.

It was not easy for him to find his place though. He joined the Dominicans and studied with them for four years. Enchanted by the life of St. Maximilian Kolbe, he then changed to the Franciscans for the next four years. Finally, in 1997, he decided to become a diocesan priest and was ordained to the priesthood two years later, at the age of forty, by the Archbishop of Marseilles.

“I believe that we have to return to a very simple method of spreading Christianity—through love, through availability, through adaptability in different situations, through a deep understanding with a supernatural perspective of what man is, in that we pray, pray. To sum it up... we are just mediators.”

In Michel-Marie’s years as a performing artist in the Paris night scene, he met numerous people who seemed to be far away from God yet were full of desire for truth and love. During his nightly performances, he always had a little statue of Our Lady standing on his piano; and when one of the guests sat down next to him to listen to the music more carefully, he turned the statue to face that person and said, “Tonight it is for her!” Nobody ever reacted negatively to this gesture. His experiences formed the way Fr. Michel-Marie approaches people today as a priest, how he responds to them in the confessional. Along with using his expressive voice in the liturgy, he still writes songs through which he hopes to awaken in the hearts a thirst for God’s infinite love. Fr. Michel-Marie met many AIDS patients in Paris; some of them he accompanied to their death. He later wrote a prayer to Mary for them; and, with the blessing of Pope John Paul II, it spread all over the world.

There’s not much to do here

*I*n 2004, the archbishop entrusted Fr. Michel-Marie the parish of St. Vincent de Paul and its impressive New Gothic church in the middle of downtown Marseilles. At that time, you could say, the parish was dying.

In a predominantly Muslim quarter of the city, less than one percent of population was practicing Catholics. They even considered tearing down the church in the 1980’s. It was closed from December to March; and, although it was open the other months of the year, they celebrated Holy Mass only on solemnities. Otherwise Mass was in the crypt where on feast days about one hundred people attended, on Sundays perhaps fifty and sometimes only ten. There were no Holy Masses during the week.

Fr. Michel-Marie remembers, “When my predecessor heard that I had been named pastor, he said to me, ‘*What, they’re sending you here? There’s not much to do.*’ Yet the archbishop, Cardinal Panafieu, who I know deliberated about this decision for two years, said to me,

‘I’m counting on you! Open the gates and doors of this church as wide as possible!’”

*T*he situation of the Catholic Church in France on the surface is different from many other countries. Most of the churches belong to the state which is responsible for their upkeep. The internal challenges, however, are quite similar to what others are facing—waning faith and religious ignorance; the great numbers who are indifferent, distrustful or even frustrated with the Church; pastors who resign or look for superficial solutions.

What can we learn from this courageous 54-year-old pastor in France? How did he approach this extremely challenging situation? We met Fr. Michel-Marie recently and were surprised, despite having been a renowned musician and now having numerous publications, to encounter such a humble, almost shy priest, yet with such determination.

With great trust

*F*r. Michel-Marie did not know the details of the situation in his new parish. People in his former parish gave him the usual advice before

he left—check out everything for a year and do not make any changes at first. Yet an inexplicable power intuitively drove him to do just the opposite.

He came up with a detailed program of what parish life should be like at St. Vincent's. *"I think Jesus would have said to me, 'If you do not start with the changes right away, you will not be able to implement them later!'"* The first thing the new pastor did after his arrival in September 2004, was to open the church again, and that, for twelve hours a day. *"I announced that we would start celebrating daily Holy Mass in the church and no longer in the well-heated crypt ... and it was bitter cold."*

Fr. Michel-Marie did not waste any time restoring the tabernacle either. Then he cleaned the whole church for several weeks with a few volunteers. He placed Our Lady in the center by hanging an "Our Lady of Perpetual Help" icon, which had hung unnoticed on a column, on the right pillar over the presider's chair in the presbytery. *"At first, I had great trust in Jesus and Mary, and a ton of work to do. I began making decisions right away, but naturally just one at a time."*

Before Michel-Marie left Nice at the age of twenty-one, he visited the famous French mystic Marthe Robin, just six months before her death. He was seeking her advice and told her of his plans to go to Paris as a musician and at the same time start a correspondence course in theology, with a heart aiming towards the priesthood. In the light of God, Marthe confirmed his plan, but she predicted concerning his path to the priesthood, "You'll need a lot of time!" As a matter of fact, he was ordained a priest nineteen years later.

How did people react to these changes?

"I tried to be very kind to everybody, I did not send anybody away and never said to anyone, 'Ma'am, forget it!' In the first months, I tried to make everybody understand, 'If we just let things go, we will have to shut down the parish within five years.' That was certain. There was something mysterious, though. In the beginning, nobody complained because suddenly 250 faithful started attending Sunday Mass. Fellow priests warned, 'Don't get your hopes up; it is only the curiosity effect and in

two weeks you'll be back to fifty.' Yet the numbers never dropped. The stream of Holy Mass attendees continually increased. Through various signs, God showed me that I had to continue. In the midst of it all, though, there was a lot of suffering, numerous and heavy trials, which actually assured the fruitfulness of this apostolate. Yes, in a certain sense, they were necessary; but while they are happening, you feel that they are not fair. It is extremely painful, and I do not wish this upon anybody."

In the service of God's presence

"When somebody goes into a church, he should be touched by the beauty of the surroundings, feeling that it is sacred," said Fr. Michel-Marie. That is why the first order of business for the new pastor was a thorough cleaning of the neglected church. *"Christ's presence in the tabernacle requires absolute*

cleanliness." He transformed the sacristy back into a true place of silence and recollection. He had the liturgical vessels cleaned and restored; he had new vestments and altar clothes made. Everything is given meaning when it is in the service of the mystery of God's presence and Holy Mass. People feel this, and so even during a financial

crisis, benefactors are never lacking whose hearts are opened through God's grace. *"God provides there where he is honored,"* the priest knows from experience.

Fr. Michel-Marie gives the mystery of the Holy Mass and the beauty of the liturgy all the space they need. *"It has to touch the hearts."* He lets them speak for themselves, without words of introduction and interjected explanations. All of his gestures are calm and emphasized; his expression tells of his recollection and loving awareness of what he is consummating.

Music has its role too. The congregation comes into and experiences God's world through the priest. For years now, the church has been overflowing on Sundays with 700-800 faithful from all over Marseilles and other towns, people of all ages, social classes and ethnic groups. Already a half an hour before Holy Mass, half the pews are full, and a reverent silence reigns. For Fr. Michel-Marie, the homily is just the means to establish a direct

and very familiar contact to the people during Holy Mass. Many people come just to hear his powerful sermons, which are easy to understand, deep and applicable to daily life. It is important to the pastor to personally greet with a friendly word every Sunday visitor after the Holy Mass outside the church.

"There is nothing special here; there are no groups or movements—everything happens through Holy Mass, Holy Confession and personal interaction." There are not even any meetings. Fr. Michel-Marie discusses anything important with each of his roughly sixty volunteers, usually over breakfast or lunch. There is a fruitful, trusting atmosphere. *"The organization of a parish,"* explains Fr. Michel-Marie, *"has to be like in a family, where everybody plays his part. You cannot mix the mission of a priest with the responsibilities of the laity because they have different natures."* His faithful agree with him on that.

On Canebière in a cassock

A cassock is the "work clothes" for Fr. Michel-Marie, helping him to meet those people who do not usually go to church. He is convinced, *"Everybody has a right to recognize a priest. Our service is so essential to people's salvation that our visibility becomes an efficacious means of encountering the supernatural world. In a world that rejects God, these signs are more important than ever before."*

After opening the church every morning at eight o'clock and listening to confessions, he goes to breakfast, but not at his apartment. He goes out to the Canebière, a busy street mall with many shops, where he drinks his coffee in one of the shops, speaks with the people or invites somebody for a croissant. *"Through simple contact with people, we can eliminate many of people's prejudices which prevent them from expecting anything from the Church. Some think, for example, the Church is rich or interferes*

with their lives, that priests are unable to live modestly...." So the pastor in the cassock purposely spends some time with the people on the street, in the post office or at the news stand. He is also kind and friendly to the Muslims.

"On the Canebière, everybody knows me. If anybody has a problem, he comes to talk to me because everybody knows that the pastor is available in the confessional before evening Mass and afterwards until 10 p.m. in his meeting room adjoining the sacristy for anybody who wishes to come. The diocesan priest is like a motherly presence in society, like the mother of a family who is simply there and willing to drop everything when her child needs help with his math homework. This requires great availability, but I think it pays off. This is not some sort of pastoral 'method' though; the readiness has to come from the depths of the heart."

One reason his church is so full is certainly the missionary zeal of his faithful who invite friends and relatives, those who seem to be searching, to come with them to St. Vincent de Paul. *“I always tell them: ‘Be sheepdogs, who seek and gather the sheep.’ And they bring an enormous number of people.”* Yet, there are also many who have found their way back to Church “by chance” through an encounter on the street with Fr. Michel-Marie, thanks to his visible presence and the supernatural goodness he radiates.

“It means a lot to me when people who have not been to Holy Mass for forty or fifty years suddenly show up at church.” There is a good reason why the parish has so many baptisms—171 last year—and many of those are adults. The pastor recounts, *“I baptized a 91-year-old man and asked him in front of the whole congregation, ‘Do you want to become a child of God?’ He answered me, ‘Yes, yes!’ He was there in his slippers. It was very beautiful and everybody applauded him.”*

Once, Fr. Michel-Marie was waiting for a train at a station in Paris. Provoked by his cassock, a woman approached him, “I ditched my faith forty years ago.”—“No problem,” the priest responded, “I can hear your confession.”—“How do you want to do that,” the woman asked with surprise. “Don’t worry, I will tell you all of your sins.” In the end, the woman was overjoyed.

The secret of our success

Behind the thriving parish is Fr. Michel-Marie’s secret: the discreet and yet strong presence of Our Lady. *“For without her,”* he is convinced, *“the life of the church would be sterile. Everything depends on her.”*

After the pastor hung her icon in a central place in the church, he soon consecrated the whole parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who is also venerated in his church under the title “Our Lady of Omnipotence”. He introduced the prayer of the Rosary three times a day—one at noon, one in the evening before the Blessed Sacrament led by the youth to which now 150-200 people come and the third one after the evening Mass.

“Since then,” Fr. Michel-Marie confirms, *“we have been swimming in grace! Try it and you will see! The blessing on the parish, in the end, is no surprise; it does not come from the poor pastor but rather from Mary who is here and wants us to continue.”*

Since Fr. Michel-Marie discovered Our Lady in his youth through the Salesian priests, his love for her has continued to grow, *“stronger and more dynamic. It has become a life with her. I speak with her; we work together, everything with greatest trust. It also has a missionary purpose: to make her known as the way to reach her son. I think the reason why evangelization does not make any progress is because Mary is not known.”*

Therefore, Fr. Michel-Marie sees the main engines of the renewal to be Mary, the Holy Mass and a visible priesthood lived with total self-offering. *“Everything must go forth from God. The future of the Church will lead to the renewal of the priesthood.”*

Translated from: Michel-Marie Zanotti-Sorkine, *Homme et prêtre*, éd. Ad Solem

Fr. Michel-Marie: “It’s my little secret. We have to understand how important Our Lady is in our lives and that she leads us when we live with her. She is our mother, the universal mother of all humanity. When we are with her, we are in the Holy Spirit, who lives in her in fullness, and then we know how we should live and what we should do. I tell this to you as my secret—be with her, speak with her. She is with us even if we do not see her.”

In the Land of the Morning Calm

The whole world has been keeping an anxious eye on the Korean peninsula since the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un came to power and has repeatedly threatened South Korea and the West. And yet, nobody knows the daring ways in which the faith moved into Korea 230 years ago.

The beginnings and the spreading of Christianity in the “Land of the Morning Calm” is so unique that there is nothing like it in the whole history of the Church.

For centuries, foreigners were forbidden to enter Korea and inhabitants were not allowed to leave the country. The one exception was a delegation that made the tiring, three-month trip to China every year to pay honor to the emperor in Peking and pay the required tribute. The emperor’s court also offered the only exposure to new developments and different ideas from Western Civilization. This made it possible in the Eighteenth Century for Christian books to reach the Confucian intellectuals in Korea who were initially intrigued with this new-found Christian teaching. Their curiosity changed into true fervor and sometimes they would withdraw to the mountains for weeks to study thoroughly and uninterruptedly.

In 1783, they sent Seunghun Lee with the yearly Peking delegation to obtain more information about Christianity. He sought out the Catholic missionaries, and after months of intense instruction, was baptized in 1784, the first Korean. Since this event was considered the birth and foundation of the Church in Korea, Seunghun Lee was given the name “Peter”, the “rock”. The enthusiastic new Christian returned to his country, and secretly began a flourishing apostolate. Peter wrote later in a letter, *“I immediately felt that my first obligation was ... to preach my new faith to all my relatives and friends.”*

Many were won over to the Church and

quickly became ardent heralds of the Gospel in their circles so that Jesus’ teachings, alone through the laity, spread over the country like wildfire. Peter wrote, *“Soon one thousand people had accepted the faith, and because they incessantly asked for baptism, I started baptizing them according to the rite which I had experienced during my own in Peking.”*


The active underground Church, which lived faithfully according to the example of the ancient church community, had to wait ten years before the first priest, Fr. Jacob Chou Moon-Mo from China, secretly entered the country in 1795. Although no missionary had ever been there before, he was astounded to find already 4,000 Christians. He celebrated the first Holy Mass in Korea and administered First Holy Communion. Naturally, his pastoral work could not remain hidden from the authorities, who brutally persecuted the Christian faith. They were determined to catch the Chinese priest who, in a matter of six years, doubled the number of Catholics. They publicly executed Fr. Jacob in 1801; he joined the ranks of the 10,000 Korean martyrs who shed their blood for the faith in the 19th Century. Their fortitude and their courageous death was a witness to thousands, and the number of Korean Christians continuously increased even though several times over the decades they had to maintain their faithfulness

without a priest. Pope John Paul II rightfully said to the youth during his second remarkable visit to Seoul in 1989, “*Your martyrs, many of them*

at your age, were stronger in their suffering and death than their persecutors in their hate and violence.”

On the 200th anniversary of the Church in Korea, Pope John Paul II visited the “Land of the Morning Calm” for the first time in 1984, and canonized 103 Korean martyrs in Seoul. Among them was also the first Korean priest, Andrew Kim (1821-1846), who became the patron of the Korean religious.

This is also evangelization!

k-Soon Francesca, the mother of our Korean Sr. Marianna, was beautifully inspired during the Year of Faith in her home city, Seoul.

I said to myself one day in prayer, “*You have to change something in your faith life.*” Yes, I was really just an average Catholic who lived as I wanted to and could skillfully avoid sacrifice, even though my husband Chung-Hae and I went to Holy Mass every day in the parish just yards from our apartment building. Looking back, I think it was a great grace that I suddenly had this unexpected desire to lead a completely new life, one more pleasing to God.

To prove my good intention to Jesus, I decided to make a concrete act of love by consciously offering him the first hour of every day. With my eagerness, I also won over my husband to accompany me every morning on my daily pilgrimage to our famous Myeong Dong Immaculate Conception Cathedral in the center of Seoul for Holy Mass. In the crypt, at the relics of a few Korean martyr-priests and French Korean missionaries, there is a Holy Mass every day at 6:30 a.m. followed by silent adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament.

Ever since we made our decision, we leave home at 5:45 a.m. After a forty-minute subway ride to the middle of the big city bustle, we receive

and adore Jesus in this calm and very special place of grace. Afterwards, my husband goes to work as a web designer and, after another forty-minutes on the subway, I start my housework.

Although waking up early and the long ride were tiring at first, it is nothing in comparison to the graces we have received. The most beautiful of these is the inner transformation of my husband. Earlier, he always left church as soon as Holy Mass was over to speak with the others outside. Now he, a convert, remains with me in the cathedral after the service for our hour of adoration, completely unaware of the time. He also quickly returned to me a book with meditations for an hour of adoration and said with a smile, “*Thanks, but I prefer to speak personally with Jesus.*”

I was so happy to receive a plenary indulgence every day during the Year of Faith by going to our cathedral. In the beginning though, I did not know for whom I should obtain it—for the poor souls, for peace in Korea and the world, for the conversion of sinners? Yet ever since the frequent request of Our Lady in Medjugorje came to mind, “*Pray for my intentions*”, I entrust the indulgence to Our Lady. She knows best who needs the spiritual help the most.

Unforgotten North Korea

*F*or the last fifty-four years, Fr. Anton Trauner from Wertingen, Germany has worked in Korea. The 92-year-old missionary has spread the message of Fatima and the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for decades throughout the country, and this always in sight of the northern part of the peninsula. *“I have always held the oppressed, hunger plagued people of North Korea close to my heart. How gladly I would use what strength I have left to bring the Gospel and the message of Fatima there as well, so that there may be true peace and unity between the North and the South. Thanks to the help of the papal nuncio and the president of the Korean parliament, I was able to hold a large prayer event on the North Korean bor-*

der in 1974 in the presence of the Archbishop of Seoul, Cardinal Stephen Kim. On the other side of the barbed wire, the North Korean radio reported, ‘People gathered on the border like wild dogs howling at the moon.’”

Since then, a prayer meeting and Holy Mass take place every year on May 13, in Imjingak, the North Korean border which has been tightly closed since 1953. As many as 3,500 faithful from all over South Korea participate and pray for the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea. It was recently possible to obtain border property from the South Korean government and, as soon as he receives construction permits, Fr. Trauner would like to build a shrine consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima.

In communist North Korea every Christian is considered an “enemy of the state” and the once blossoming communities have been dissolved or have become a “Church of Silence”. South Korea, however, is counted among the leading high tech nations and, with the highest percentage of Christians, is considered the “Miraculous Church of Asia”. Every fourth Korean professes Christianity, and there are not enough priests to catechize all those who are interested in baptism. In Seoul alone, there are two to four hundred conversions a year. Lay Christians, as they were at the beginning of the history of the Church in Korea, are intensely involved in the work of evangelization.

*“The Lady of All Nations
will be brought throughout the world
in the same way, from town to town,
from country to country. This simple prayer
will create one community.”*

Message of Amsterdam on February 17, 1952