

Triumph of the Heart

MARY STAR OF EVANGELIZATION

Family of Mary

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*“Mary will be for Christians on the way
to the Great Jubilee of the Third Millennium
the Star...”*

*Pope St. John Paul II
in his Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente*

The Victory is Mary's!

Over the last decades, various Church committees around the world have considered how Christ can be brought once again to the nations through modern means. With the best intentions, sophisticated pastoral plans were developed, commissions created, international congresses organized and modern means of communication used.

Nevertheless in many places these efforts have had little effect. Was the vocation of Our Lady perhaps given too little attention? The examples in this issue of our missionary magazine testify to the power God has given to Mary and the unique role he has entrusted to her as the universal Mediatrix of Grace for the evangelization of the nations.

*D*uring the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI gave Our Lady the title “Star of Evangelization”. Pope St. John Paul II followed his predecessor calling Mary the “Star of the New Evangelization”, and he even consecrated his life and his whole pontificate to her with the words “Totus Tuus – Totally Yours”.

As Mother of the Church, indeed of all humanity, God has entrusted her with the guidance and protection of all his children. Therefore, through her coredemptive vocation and intercessory power, she is able to bring people back to her son. She achieves what no pastoral initiative can obtain because she is the one who snatches her children from Satan’s power and mediates to them the Holy Spirit, God’s love. We see the best

confirmations of this truth when we consider the places of grace where Our Lady has appeared: Zaragoza, Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima and Tre Fontane in Rome. This mother has worked countless conversions and miracles in souls, in a way that not even the holiest of priests has ever done. In an effort to bring Christ to the nations that have been dechristianized or are far from God, we should once again consider Mary.

Pope John Paul II demonstrated this to us in a unique way by entrusting his apostolate to Mary. He consecrated to her the country and the peoples of every pastoral journey he made. The first trip of his pontificate brought him to Guadalupe and the last one took him to Lourdes. He was convinced that an evangelization with lasting fruits is only

possible with Mary—because that is how God wants it. Just as he choose Mary 2000 years ago in order to become man, today he also wants to be brought to the nations through her.

He entrusted to Mary, the apocalyptic woman, the victory over Satan. Not only did John the Apostle describe this in chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, but Our Lady testified to it herself in Fatima when she said that God wants, “*Russia be consecrated to my Immaculate Heart, and I shall ask that on the First Saturday of every month Communions of reparation be made in atonement for the sins of the world. If my wishes are fulfilled, Russia will be converted*

and there will be peace ... in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph” (July 13, 1917).

Pope John Paul II was also convinced of this. That is why he cited the former Primate of Poland Cardinal Hlond in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*: “*The victory, when it comes, will be a victory through Mary.*” The visionary of Amsterdam also heard the following significant words, “*Understand this well: Even the Lord needed His mother in order to come to life. It is through the mother that life comes. Hence she must be brought back into your churches and among the peoples, and you will witness the revival*” (March 25, 1973).

The Shepherdess Goes Ahead of the Flock

John Bosco (1815-1888), in an audience with Pope Pius IX in 1858, recounted how his blossoming work with the youth in Turin, Italy began. The Pope asked him to record accurately all the extraordinary events associated with it, and so in obedience, the saint wrote down his “Memoirs of the Oratory” beginning with the very first of his some 180 “dreams” which gave him supernatural knowledge about hidden and future things.

The first vision-like dream from his childhood, in which Mary played a central role as she would later on as well, left a deep impression on the nine-year-old for the rest of his life. In the prophetic vision, John saw a large crowd of rowdy boys playing and laughing. Many, however, were swearing, and he immediately tried to silence them with his words and even with his fists. A majestic figure appeared with a radiant face and wrapped in a dazzling white robe.

He amicably called John by name and told him to take charge of these children, “*You will*

have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love. Start right away to teach them the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue.”

John was confused and argued that he was merely a poor, ignorant child himself. “*Who are you, ordering me to do the impossible?*”

The man answered him, “*I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance you can become wise. Without her, all wisdom is foolishness.*”

“*But who are you that speak so?*”

“*I am the son of the woman whom your*

mother has taught you to greet three times a day.” (in the Angelus)

*A*t that moment, John saw a lady of stately appearance wearing a mantle that sparkled as though covered with stars. She took him kindly by the hand and showed him the crowd of young boys that had changed to a large number of goats, dogs, cats, bears, and other animals.

“This is the field of your work,” she said, “Make yourself humble, strong, and energetic. And what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do for my children.”

Suddenly before John’s eyes all the wild animals turned into lambs which were all jumping and bleating as if to welcome that man and lady. He did not understand and, crying, he asked the lady to explain it to him. She then placed her hand on his head and said, *“In good time you will understand everything.”* With that, a noise woke him, and he was completely bewildered. His hands seemed to be sore from the blows he had given, and his face hurt from those he had

received. The memory of the man and the lady, and the things said and heard, so occupied his mind that he could not sleep any more that night. When he told his family about it in the morning his mother commented, *“Who knows, maybe you’ll become a priest someday.”*

*J*ohn was forced to drop out of school at the age of sixteen because his family was too poor to pay for his education. He was worried that he would not be able to become a priest, but Our Lady appeared to him again in a dream as a shepherdess. She was at the head of a large flock and said, *“John, I entrust this whole flock to your care.”*

“How should I protect and care for so many sheep and lambs?” he replied. *“Where shall I find the necessary pastures to which to lead them?”*

“Do not be afraid! I am with you,” Mary calmed him, and she kept her word. In a wonderful way she accompanied John Bosco with his work for saving the at-risk boys.

It all started with a single Hail Mary

*O*n December 8, 1841, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, it was obviously the “heavenly shepherdess” who led him his first protégé. As the newly ordained 26-year-old priest was preparing in the sacristy for Holy Mass, a boy whom he did not know suddenly came in. Since he was not an altar server, the angry sacristan beat him and sent him away. *“Why did you hit the boy?”* asked John Bosco. *“He is my friend!”* – *“What, that rascal is your friend?”* – *“Yes, call him back right now. I have to talk to him.”*

And so the intimidated teenager stayed for Holy Mass. Afterwards, John Bosco talked to him and found out that he was a 16-year-old orphan named Bartolomeo Garelli. The apprentice of a mason, he could neither read, nor write, nor pray. *“Can you sing?”* the young priest asked him.

“No!” – *“Can you whistle?”* A smile grew on the boy’s face and John Bosco knew that he had won his confidence. Bartolomeo had not yet received First Holy Communion and he did not know the Catechism either. *“Would you come if I explained it to you?”* – *“Oh yes!”* – *“This evening?”* – *“Sure!”* – *“Or now?”* – *“Gladly!”*

Before John began this memorable first catechism lesson, however, he knelt down and prayed a Hail Mary deeply so that Our Lady would obtain for him the grace of saving this poor youth’s soul.

Forty-five years later, just two years before his death, the indisputably most successful educator of his time said, looking back on the many good things he was able to accomplish with his thousands of spiritual sons, *“All the blessings and graces showered upon us by heaven are*

the fruit of that first Hail Mary said with fervor and the right intention, together with young Bartolomeo Garelli.”

*T*he emerging industrial city Turin attracted many, but few had much success. John Bosco's area of work were the orphaned or neglected children wandering the streets aimlessly; apprentices who had been taken advantage of and unemployed juveniles who scruffily sat on the street begging, stealing or joining gangs involved in bloody fights. In addition, there were hordes

of young men between the ages of twelve and eighteen who hung around the prisons. It is no wonder the John Bosco's joyful spirit and amazing diversity attracted many young people and that their numbers increased rapidly from Sunday to Sunday. When he could no longer do all the work himself caring for the hundreds, Our Lady inspired him to form educators and priests from among these spiritual sons. Finally the Congregation of the Salesians made its modest beginnings on December 18, 1859, under the direction of the 44-year-old with 17 members, among them two priests.

Mary built herself a house

*Y*oung vocations came to the Salesians from everywhere and from all walks of life, and it did not take long before the spiritual center for the Salesian Family was the famous Marian church which Mary made reference to at the end of one of John Bosco's dreams when she showed him a field. *“In this place where the glorious martyrs of Turin, Adventor and Octavius, suffered martyrdom, on these clods soaked and sanctified by their blood, I wish that God be honored in a very special manner.”* Suddenly John Bosco saw a glorious church with the inscription *“Here is my house, my veneration will go forth from here!”*

During the following years of construction he often repeated, *“Our Lady wants us to build a church and honor her with the title, ‘Mary Help of Christians’. These are sad times. We truly need the help of Mary for the preservation and defense of the holy Catholic Faith. This will be the mother church of our congregation and the center from which will go forth all the other works benefiting the poor children left to their own devices.”*

How it came to pass is among the most wonderful events in the life of John Bosco. Our Lady had to help her son realize what she desired. With just a few coins he made the first payment to the construction company and said smiling, *“Don't worry, Our Lady will come up with*

the necessary money for construction. I'm just the cashier.”

When the time came to pay the workers for the first time, John Bosco remembered a wealthy woman who was ill and went to visit her right away. After he had advised her to pray a novena to the “Help of Christians” he added, *“If your condition improves and it seems appropriate, you could give some alms for the church Mary Help of Christians being built in Valdocco.”* The news of her prayers being answered spread quickly and awoke everywhere a trust in Mary Help of Christians.

*M*any hurried with their problems to John Bosco who with the invocation of the “Help of Christians” and a blessing worked sensational healing and miracles. In Genoa, Florence, Milan, Rome and Naples as well as in Vienna, Paris and London people took refuge in Mary Help of Christians and, in thanksgiving for the numerous answers to their prayers, generous donations were made.

John Bosco was elated when the church was completed after only four years of construction and solemnly consecrated in 1868. *“The Lord and his Mother wanted to use a poor priest to complete such a feat. Mary built a house for herself. Every stone, every object in the church is a testimony to a grace from Mary.”*

Together with Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia belongs to the southernmost part of South America. In a dream in 1872, John Bosco saw the beautiful, sprawling, grassy plain bounded by the Andes mountain chain. "On this plain I saw throngs of men roaming about. They were of extraordinary height and build, fierce-looking, with shaggy, long hair, bronzed and a dark complexion. ... At that moment, I saw a small group of missionaries advancing with cheerful demeanor toward them, preceded by a band of youngsters. ... I could tell that they were Salesian missionaries ... their arrival was causing widespread joy among that throng of barbarians. They lowered their weapons, ceased their savage behavior, and received our missionaries most courteously. I then saw that our missionaries were teaching the natives, and they gladly paid attention and were learning. I watched them for a while, and then I realized that they were reciting the rosary, missionaries and savages, peaceably together. After a while, one of the missionaries intoned, 'Praise Mary, Ye Faithful Tongues;' and all those men with one voice took up the hymn. They sang it through in such unison and with such power that I woke up with a start."

A guide for a worldwide mission

John Bosco always had the missionary desire to bring the light of the Gospel to countries where no other missionary had gone. Although urgent requests poured in from Africa, Asia and America, he hesitated sending out the first Salesians until 1847 when he clearly recognized that the Indians which Our Lady had shown him two years earlier in his first missionary dream were the native peoples of Patagonia. So on November 11, 1875, the going away ceremony for the very first Salesian missionaries to South America took place in the church Mary Help of Christians in Turin. John Bosco joyfully prophesied, "Now

Our Lady's words start to come true: 'My veneration will go forth from here.'"

The sending out of new missionaries took place every year in the shrine Mary Help of Christians. Today, the Salesians, along with the Jesuits and the Franciscans, are the Roman Catholic Church's three largest men's religious orders active worldwide. With all its development, however, one thing must not be forgotten which was always before John Bosco's eyes and what he testified to at the end of his life: "*We never took a step which Our Lady did not indicate beforehand. Mary accomplished everything in my life.*"

The Secret of My Success

Mary carried Jesus in her womb, she bore Jesus, and God himself chose this way through Mary to come into the world to redeem it.

This is important to remember for any evangelization, for any mission, which unfortunately often has little lasting effect because Mary is not brought to life in the pastoral work.

And this, despite the fact that Jesus gave Mary to all mankind as Mother as he was dying on the Cross.

Blessed Mother Teresa, by far the best-known missionary of the 20th century, understood this so well! Her whole life, she gave Mary a central place: in her personal life as well as in

the formation of her spiritual daughters and in her worldwide missionary work, which is so Marian in character. As a young girl by the name of Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, she learned to trust

in Mary in Skopje, formerly part of Albania. Her family affectionately called Agnes Gonxha “*the blossom*”. Later, as Mother Teresa, she would emphasize how thankful she was to her mother whom she lovingly called “*Nona-Lok*”, “Mother soul”: “*Whenever I think of my mother, the word ‘saint’ comes to mind because through her words and deeds she seemed like one to us.*” She often admonished her daughter, “*Thank Our Holy Mother for everything!*” Agnes

Gonxha joined a Marian movement when she was just a schoolgirl. The 12-year-old listened very attentively at the regular meetings when the parish pastor Fr. Jambrekovic enthusiastically read letters from fellow Jesuits in the missions for the poor in Calcutta, where they had been since 1924. That was Agnes Gonxha’s first inspiration for her later vocation. At the age of 18, she left her family and homeland in 1928, for Dublin, Ireland to enter the Loreto Sisters who also worked in India.

With the Mother's hand

On the path of her vocation, Mother Teresa received precious advice, a spiritual inheritance so to say, from Nona-Lok, advice she never forgot. In the Marian Year 1987-1988, at the Family Congress in Kevelaer, Germany, Bishop Paul Maria Hnilica from Rome asked her the reason for her great missionary success. Mother Teresa’s answer to Bishop Hnilica, with whom she had a deep friendship and blessed cooperation for more than 30 years until her death, was surprisingly simple. “*I have my mother to thank for my love for Our Lady. When I was seven or eight years old, I was walking through the park with her and she was holding my hand when she said to me, ‘Allow yourself always to be led by Our Lady like I am holding your hand now.’ Therefore, I do not do anything other than let myself be led by our heavenly Mother. That is the secret of my success.*”

Still forty years before she entrusted Bishop Hnilica her recipe for success, Mother Teresa had gone to the slums of Calcutta in 1947 to serve the poorest of the poor. At that time, when she was beginning her work, an unimaginable “*terrible darkness*” took hold of the soul of this sister in the white sari with the three Marian blue stripes, that she held on all the tighter to Mary’s hand and let the pearls of her Rosary pass continuously through her fingers in prayer. This convinced everybody who worked with Mother Teresa or who met her anywhere in the world of her sincere devotion and love for Our Lady. Mother Teresa’s spiritual darkness lasted for nearly fifty years.

Mary prepared her for this in a vision which also took place in 1947. The future founder of a religious order saw a great crowd of people enveloped in darkness, a darkness she would experience until her death. Our Lady was standing in the middle of all the people whom she called her children. Mother Teresa saw herself as a small child who was standing directly in front of Mary, so close that she was literally clothed in her presence.

In Amsterdam the Mother of All Nations speaks about going ahead of her son. This can be easily verified in the Bible because chronologically in her life, in her yes at the annunciation and in her suffering, she did in fact precede Jesus, also in her missionary surrender. One need only consider her visit to Elizabeth: Inasmuch as Mary as the first missionary brought Christ, she transmitted to John sanctifying grace so that already in his mother’s womb he was filled with the Holy Spirit just as the Archangel Gabriel had predicted to Zachariah (Lk. 1:15).

At home in Skopje, Nona-Lok had also told her daughter Agnes Gonxha from her earliest years with what selflessness and love Mary hurried to Elizabeth. Time and again she encouraged her daughter to follow Mary’s example by visiting the poor, helping them and bringing them relief. Later, Mother Teresa often repeated to the Missionaries of Charity her own mother’s words, “*Our Lady went in haste because charity could not wait. How nice it would be if we always remembered that!*”

In the Brazilian favelas

*T*he sisters of Mother Teresa have always taken to heart the advice their foundress once gave them and conscientiously see themselves as Our Lady's coworkers, coworkers of the Mother who has hurried ahead of them wherever they go. This is also the case in the notorious, poverty-stricken quarters of the metropolis Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the needs and problems are so great that the missionary sisters there are completely overwhelmed. Nevertheless, through their trust in Our Lady in their strenuous daily missionary life amazing miracles take place. Fr. Leo Maasburg recounts an impressive event in his book "Mother Teresa of Calcutta: A Personal Portrait". It reveals the touching power of Mary, how she eases even the most difficult missions and makes them fruitful:

"The Sisters regularly visited families and elderly people who lived alone in one of the favelas (slums) where not even the police dared to go. The area was ruled with cruelty and violence by local drug mafia. ... To try to help the people in the favelas, the Sisters first set up a copy of the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima at the edge of one of the slums. An enormous crowd of chil-

dren immediately gathered, and the Sisters prayed with them. When they had finished praying, the Sisters asked, *'Whose family most urgently needs the Mother of God?'*

"A little girl spoke up and said that her mother was now all alone and had been acting very strangely. The Sisters went to her home and met a woman who was clearly psychologically disturbed. Only at the little girl's insistence did the mother even let the Sisters in. But then she told her story. The drug mafia had set fire to her husband and hung his charred body on her front door. A little later they had kidnapped her son, cut his body into pieces, and left them in front of her door.

"The Sisters taught the woman the Hail Mary and left the statue of Our Lady of Fatima with her for nine days. When they visited again, the room had already changed; everything was clean and neat. The woman was psychologically sound. *'The Mother of God has healed me, but you can't take her away from me,'* she said.

"Of course the Sisters left the statue of Our Lady with her. Today the woman is one of the Sisters' coworkers."

Edel Mary Quinn

When Frank Duff founded the “Legion of Mary” with a few faithful women in Dublin, Ireland in 1921, nobody had any idea that this lay movement ignited a spiritual wildfire that would soon rage throughout the world. The little group, consecrated entirely to Mary, intended simply to lead those around them to Jesus through Mary. St. Louis de Montfort described this method of evangelization in his writings, “They will see clearly that Mary is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus and will surrender themselves to her, body and soul, without reserve in order to belong entirely to Jesus.”

One of the most zealous legionaries of Mary in Dublin was Edel Mary Quinn, a witty blonde girl, gifted athletically and artistically, who loved to play the piano and violin and had outstanding leadership abilities. She was the oldest of five children, and so at age 17 she had to renounce her plans for the future and find a job to support her family financially. When the 20-year-old secretary met the young Legion of Mary movement at a weekly gathering in 1928 and heard, *“We place ourselves completely at Mary’s disposition”*, Edel immediately asked to become a member.

She energetically fulfilled not only the two required hours of service every week by visiting the elderly and sick, but she soon sacrificed the little free time she had in the evenings after strenuous office work and even her Sunday afternoons. Since the young Edel proved to be so good, Frank Duff entrusted her with the responsibility of a group that cared for prostitutes. A cardinal later wrote, *“She was faced daily with sour faces, swearing, rejection, filthy quarters, insects and the pain a sensitive soul feels when it encounters godlessness and corruption.”*

Often until midnight, she dedicated herself with zeal and ingenuity to the street girls, as if they were her own children, only to be up again at seven for the early morning Holy Mass and

to pray the Rosary. Edel was well aware that, in spite of all their efforts, *“it is not our task to merely work, but ... to sanctify ourselves. It is important to pray a lot for these poor women and to make enough sacrifices. I will try to act like Mary and make her patience and understanding love my own.”* Her success was surprising. In a short period, many of the prostitutes were ready to move into a home that had been founded just for them.

Edel’s young boss from France also learned to value deeply his employee’s noble soul. When he asked for her hand in marriage, however, she had to admit that she intended to enter the Convent of the Poor Clares in Belfast as soon as her family could survive without her.

God, however, had other plans with his future missionary! Edel suffered a hemorrhage and was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis with little hope of recovery. After 18 months in a sanatorium, she eagerly returned to her job and her beloved Legion work although she was still ill. This surprised and touched everybody. She wrote with an inner peace, *“With childlike love I offer God a new page in the book of my life.”*

Jesus wrote on this page in a very unexpected way when he called 29-year-old Edel to eastern Africa in 1936 as an envoy for the Legion of Mary. She founded hundreds of groups in modern

day Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi and on Mauritius.

Despite many objections that she was being sent to her death, Edel gladly accepted the task of bringing Our Lady to Africa. *“Everything for him through Mary!”* was her slogan, and

during her three-month navel journey, she wrote humorously to Frank Duff, *“I am glad you let me go, and later the others will be glad too.”* At the same time, she also knew that she could do nothing without Mary. For this reason her life’s motto was:

*“As a child
lets itself be carried by its mother,
as it lives and breathes in her, so, with eyes closed,
I surrender myself once and for all to Our Lady.
Mary must work through me.”*

During their weekly meetings, a group from the Legion of Mary prays the Rosary and listens to a spiritual reading together. Then each one of them reports about the work they have completed over the past week. For example, some have First Holy Communion or RCIA groups, others visit nursing homes, the sick, alcoholics or prisoners, some do an apostolate on the streets and others help the homeless. Afterwards, everybody receives a new apostolic assignment for the coming week.

*E*del Mary Quinn lived in East Africa for a total of eight years, and she always tried to *“diminish and be consumed for Christ”* as she expressed it. Shortly after arriving in Nairobi, she noted the problems of the resident Christians in this little Babylon of languages, races and social classes. How much tension there was between the Europeans, Indians, Arabs and the various African tribes! They were all Catholic, but they had their own separate churches and never celebrated together.

That is why Edel’s first goal was to unite them through Mary. When the locals heard about her plan, they said, *“What you want is unrealistic. You don’t know Nairobi. If unity among all these groups were possible, the missionaries of the past would have long since accomplished it.”*

Edel would not be discouraged and responded, *“Why don’t we trust in Our Lady? She knows what she has to do. Let Our Lady do it!”*

Her trust was rapidly repaid, and the impossible came to be. After only six months, the Catholics of the various nations and races, who formerly had been separated by animosity and discrimination, had their first large Legion of Mary meeting in the Peter Claver Church. Side by side,

they peacefully consecrated themselves to Our Lady before her altar in their mother language. It was a historic event in the Catholic Church of Kenya, indeed in all of eastern Africa, and one of the most joyful days of Edel’s life. She said, *“This is precisely what one might expect when working for the Blessed Virgin Mary. The key to success is unity with Mary.”*

Bishop John Heffernan of Nairobi gratefully wrote, *“After a year of Edel Mary Quinn’s work, the atmosphere of my diocese was transformed. Without making any commotion, she brought a seed of life ... to the Catholics. You could feel the grace being transmitted. ... She was able to bring people together whom I, their bishop, and my missionaries were unable to unite. ... God’s hand was visible.”*

*T*he mild Irish missionary awaited from Our Lady all things great and small regarding the blossoming of the Church in Africa. Her enthusiastic missionary zeal is unique in the history of Africa. In the beginning Edel, a young woman in her early 30’s, was often already out on the street at five in the morning courageously looking to

catch a ride with some truck, usually packed with African men, which would carry her for hours over rough roads through the jungle to the most remote mission stations and hidden villages in areas where no white person had ever been.

Wherever she went, always praying the Rosary, she inflamed the natives of various tribes and, for the first time, African women, school children, the illiterate and even lepers felt responsible and worked in the Marian groups for the development of the Faith, something which until that time she had left up to the white missionaries.

Later on, after a couple of driving lessons, Edel made adventurous drives of up to 100 miles a day. She traveled with her own "Rolls Royce", a beat up old car with a gun in the back seat for defense against the wild animals. She traveled all over the territory, regardless of heat, tropical rain and mud, with breakdowns and nights spent involuntarily in the jungle. Even for healthy missionaries this would have been a martyrdom. Yet this apparently fragile Irish woman never complained. Even the greatest difficulties and resistance could not slow down or hinder her joy for the apostolate. She drew her strength from the daily Holy Eucharist, from reading the "Secret of Mary" by St. Louis de Montfort and, above all, out of her love for God. "*We have only one life, and perhaps only a short one at that, to prove our love,*" she said with a smile.

Even when the doctors forced Edel to stay in bed for months because of malaria, pleurisy or tuberculosis, she used the time intensely. She could finally pray in silence because "*on the inside I am a Poor Clare on African soil,*" she confessed. With great interest, she accompanied in prayer the growth of the Legion of Mary around the world, for example in Australia or former

Burma. If good news arrived from her many new foundations, then Edel, even when she had a fever of 105 or more, wrote up to 40 letters a day, encouraging her Marian groups, giving advice and training new leaders. She also found time to learn Swahili in order to speak with the natives in their mother tongue.

Edel remained faithful to her resolution "*I have to be a bringer of grace for every soul; I mean that Mary has to be a bringer of grace through me!*" No sooner was she back on her feet than she immediately undertook a six-week missionary journey to Tanzania in the glorious Savannah at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, to form new groups there.

The happiest time of her mission was finally the half a year she spent in 1940 at the invitation of the Marian Archbishop John Lee on the island of Mauritius in the middle of the Indian Ocean. At the end of her visit, 20 spiritual leaders and nearly 300 members of the Legion of Mary prayed their consecration to Mary with the Archbishop who encouraged the Legionaries, "*If you fulfill your apostolate in the spirit of Faith and united with Mary, it will have a great effect and no one will be able to resist.*" Since Edel was unable personally to introduce the Legion of Mary to the neighboring island Reunion, the legionaries from Mauritius did so, and in a short time, more than 60 groups blossomed there as well.

In her last month, the 36-year-old still undertook an 18-hour trip in Kenya where she suffered a heart attack. "*I am ready whenever Our Lady comes to get me,*" she said with surrender. Looking at her statue of Mary, which had accompanied her on every mission and every meeting, Edel Mary Quinn died on May 12, 1944.

The seed sprouts in China

*W*hen Edel found out that they were hoping to introduce the Legion of Mary in China, she nearly jumped out of her bed for joy, and she was immediately ready to go to the Far East

as soon as her work in Africa was finished. She did this spiritually! It was realized formally by Archbishop Antonio Riberi (1897-1967), who attentively followed her Marian apostolate as the

Apostolic Delegate to Africa and supported her in 33 dioceses because he grew in his conviction, *“The Legion of Mary is a miracle of modern times and one of the greatest gifts of Our Lady to the modern world.”*

Later, in 1947, as the new Internuntius of China, he warmly recommended the Legion of Mary to all the bishops, and in 1948 introduced them everywhere in the huge “Middle kingdom” as a shield against the threat of Communism. *“I would never have had the courage had I not seen the astonishing success of Edel Quinn’s*

apostolate. Yet if God made use of that extremely ill girl to animate a continent like Africa, then it was exactly what we needed. ... So Edel, hidden in the African wilderness, contributed to saving China without even knowing it.”

The spreading of the Legion of Mary in China surpassed all expectations. By January 1951, despite heavy communist persecution, 1000 Marian groups in 90 dioceses had been founded. More than 4000 martyrs have come out of these groups.

The beatification processes for both the Servant of God Edel Mary Quinn (1907-1944) and Frank Duff (1889-1980) have been opened.

The Most Successful Missionary

At the beginning of the 16th century, Our Lady accomplished in Mexico what all the missionaries put together were unable to do—in just seven years, she won over the hearts of more than nine million Aztecs for the Catholic Faith through her apparitions in Guadalupe (see Triumph of the Heart #17).

Mary has proven to be a successful missionary not only in America but also in other parts of the world, like Europe, where she works incredible miracles of conversion to this day.

A nation converts to the Catholic Faith

*I*n Siluva, Lithuania, for example, all the Calvinists converted to Catholicism in a short period of time through the apparitions of Our Lady in 1608. Eighty-six years earlier, the aristocrat Zabiela had forced the whole city to become Calvinist. In that time of need, the pastor, Fr. Jonas Holubka, hid the highly venerated icon of Mary and the liturgical items

in a rock face. After the last Catholic in Siluva died, nobody else knew of this treasure.

Our Lady appeared to shepherd children standing near the rock where he had hid her icon, but nobody believed the children. As the Calvinistic pastor sought to put a stop to these “Catholic schemers”, he also saw Our Lady weeping, just as the children had described her. Her tears touched

the hearts of the people so much that they all converted to the Catholic Faith. Just ten days after the conversion of the pastor, on September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, more than 11,000 people received Holy Communion at the place of the apparition. A blind man, who was more than 100 years old, had a vision of where Fr. Holubka had hid the original icon. After finding the image using the man's description, the faithful streamed in from all over Lithuania to venerate her. As a true mother, Mary responded to her children's trust by miraculously healing countless people.

Pope Pius VI confirmed the authenticity of

the Marian apparitions in Siluva with a decree in 1775. Between 1945 and 1990, when Lithuania belonged to the Soviet Union, even the communist government was unable to stop the annual eight-day-long celebration in memory of the apparitions.

As many as 200,000 pilgrims come to their heavenly mother in Siluva each year on the Feast of the Name of Mary. On September 8, 1991, Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevicius, who suffered for many years during the communist persecution, placed the new evangelization of the Lithuanian people under the protection of Our Lady.

Mother of Mercy Queen of Lithuania

*T*he "Gate of Dawn" in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, is also famous throughout the world. The icon of the Mother of Mercy arrived in Vilnius in 1652, and it was first placed above one of the nine gates in the city wall. Whenever someone entered or left the city, they greeted Our Lady. In 1671, the Carmelite monks built a chapel above the gate's arch and placed the icon inside in order to protect it from wind and rain and to make it more accessible for those who wanted to pray. More than 8,000 silver votive offerings testify to the graces received from Our Lady. One of these votive offerings is a silver crescent moon that has decorated the icon since 1849. In 1927, the papal nuncio solemnly crowned Our

Lady with two golden crowns: she was to be for Church and State the Queen of Lithuania. Therefore, not only the Polish primate and 28 bishops participated in this extraordinary celebration but many dignitaries and even the president. On this occasion, Pope Pius XI issued a decree granting her the title "Mother of Mercy".

Not even once during the Second World War nor under the communist rule was the chapel of the Gate of Dawn ever closed. From many countries, especially Poland and Belarus, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Greek Catholics come to the Mother of Mercy seeking consolation, advice, healing and protection. There she unites her children in a way that no priest or missionary can.

A Long Struggle

Christoph Alfons Maria Herre from Weissenau, Germany was ordained a priest on May 10, 2014 through the imposition of Cardinal Mauro Piacenza's hands at the Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto, Italy. Above all, he has Our Lady to thank for his "yes" to the priesthood, and so it was special for him to be ordained in the same place where Mary spoke her decisive "yes" at the annunciation for the redemption of humanity. Fr. Alfons Maria tells us a little about the story of his vocation.

*I*t took a long time before I was able to say yes to my vocation to the priesthood. I mean, my family was deeply Catholic and I was proud to have a lot of friends who are priests, but to become a priest myself was the last thing I would have ever wished for myself. Actually, I am not sure why it was like that, but I can remember when I was about eleven years old how I felt a vocation for the first time one night on the way to bed. Immediately I answered myself, "*Become a priest? Over my dead body!*" I shocked myself with this reaction, and, in reality, I was afraid I might die that night. So I sincerely asked Jesus for forgiveness, but I avoided speaking with anybody about it.

The years passed and I started studying industrial mechanics. One day, we were taking a tour of the plant and we came to a section where the workers were doing something that looked very boring. One of my friends said to me, "*That has to be the worst job in the world.*" Faster than I could think, I answered, "*No, becoming a priest would be even worse!*" My friend was just as astounded about what I said as I was!

During my civil service some years later, I again had to withstand an inner fight that I did not understand. A Cistercian friend of mine invited me over to watch a documentary about monasticism. It was a very boring film, but nevertheless my heart started pounding heavily and I became very agitated. I found my way out of all further invitations to such films with

the excuse that they were too boring for me.

A short time later, a confessor asked me if I had ever considered a vocation to the priesthood, and he thought that I should not wait for an experience like St. Paul. That made me very mad. How dare he ask me something like that when he did not even know me? I said then to Jesus, "*If you want me to be a priest, I need a hundred percent confirmation, something just like St. Paul!*"

*T*hrough my parents and a retreat, I learned about the consecration to Mary according to St. Louis de Montfort, and I consecrated myself to her. I prayed earnestly every day for my future wife and dreamed of a family with lots of children.

In December 2003, I participated in a retreat entitled "Proclamation", and during Adoration, I felt a strong call from Jesus to the priesthood. Then I made him a promise, "*If you really want me to become a priest, then you have to show it to me very clearly, one hundred percent. I will finish my degree in engineering, and I promise you not to look for a girlfriend so that I am free to make a decision. However, if I don't receive a clear answer from you, as soon as I'm finished studying I will find a girl and get married.*" It was the first time in my life that I left the possibility of a vocation open. Today I see it as a grace, which Our Lady obtained for me after my consecration to her.

A close priest friend of mine, Fr. Sauter, invited me to join a pilgrimage to a Day of Prayer in Amsterdam over Pentecost 2004. I returned so happy from this day, filled with such a love for Our Lady, that from that day on I prayed the whole Rosary and the prayer from Amsterdam every day.

A few months later, I accepted an offer to study abroad for a semester in South Africa. There were so many new things to see there, so many inexpensive entertainment options, parties, dance clubs, bars, beaches, outings... you could just enjoy life. There was not much time left for prayer, and I thought to myself that this was surely the sign that I was not called to the priesthood because otherwise God would not have given me the opportunity to come here.

When I returned to Germany in May 2005, I realized how much my faith-life had suffered. To bring myself back into shape interiorly, I signed up for a youth retreat. During Holy Mass, I had an inner experience in which Jesus gave me the one hundred percent confirmation of my vocation upon which we had agreed. All my objections dissipated into thin air. The abilities, which I did not believe to have, he could give me if I trusted in him. Is he not God? *“Do you love me?”* is what the Lord asked St. Peter before he entrusted him the flock. Tears came, and I knew that I owed the Lord an answer. However, I felt that my answer was a very serious matter and included the surrender of my whole life and plans. *“Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”* I had made an agreement with the Lord; he had given me the clarity and so I had to keep my promise. I felt no joy whatsoever because my dream of a family with lots of children had to be left by the wayside.

I returned very agitated from this retreat. Yet I did not tell anybody about what had taken place inside me; I shared my secret only with Fr. Sauter. *“I do not want to live as a diocesan priest; I need a community, a ‘family’.”* Fr. Sauter, who is spiritually very close to the Family of Mary, arranged a meeting for me with Fr. Paul Maria Sigl, the founder of the community to which I now belong. Fr. Paul strengthened me a lot when he

told me he believed very much in the authenticity of my vocation to the priesthood. Yet he also showed me how God in his love gives me the full freedom to decide. He invited me to visit the Family of Mary sometime in Rome—whenever I wanted.

As a parting gift, he gave me a little laminated picture of the “Mother of Mercy”, the Queen of Lithuania, and said, *“Carry this icon with you always. She will lead you on the right path.”* I have done so to this day, and she has kept her promise.

At first, I only told my mother about my plans. She was overjoyed and admitted to me that she already knew in her heart about my vocation to the priesthood. Her sensitive, tender love was a great help for me in the months before I revealed it to the whole family and my friends. They were pretty astounded, especially my college friends. I finished my engineering degree since I was about to graduate, and finally flew to Rome for Holy Week 2006.

When I arrived at the seminary, they received me with so much love that I immediately felt at home. Holy Week and Easter were wonderful. I incessantly thanked God that he led me here and had called me to be a priest.

To be completely sure that I was not the victim of an initial euphoria, and that I had really arrived at the place where God wanted me, I asked Our Lady for a sign because I knew I could count on her. In return, I was going to do the 33-day preparation for consecration according to Montfort and then consecrate to her my path to the priesthood. Without planning it, the 33rd day turned out to be May 31, the day which Our Lady in Amsterdam says will be the day of the dogma, and the community had planned a trip to Loreto that day to renew the consecration to her Immaculate Heart in the Holy House of Nazareth. Our Lady could not have given me a clearer answer. I cannot describe the joy that filled me. My path to the priesthood began in Loreto, and now I was even ordained a priest here.

Today, I can only thank God for the great patience he had with me and for his love, which never pushed me and yet always

encouraged me. There is nothing more beautiful in the world for me now than to live for him and be his apostle.

“It is not possible to understand the priest without the Holy Eucharist, and the Holy Eucharist would not exist without the priest. Therefore, the priest cannot fully realize his priesthood unless the Eucharist becomes the center and root of his life so that all his activity is nothing other than a radiance of the Eucharist.”

Excerpt from Cardinal Mauro Piacenza’s homily

Nothing is Impossible for God

For newlyweds Monica Battelli and Marco Manzaroli from Riccione, Italy, Our Lady is truly the “star” that they follow. That was not always the case though. Monica was the first to accept the grace of conversion that the Queen of Peace gave to her in Medjugorje. During their honeymoon in Rome, they came to visit us and joyfully explained how Our Lady led them to Jesus and to one another.

Monica: Riccione, one of the most famous vacation spots along Italy’s Adriatic coast, is a unique city. Along with the many relaxing tourist attractions, there is, of course, a busy nightlife too with its usual vices of immorality and drugs. When I was a teenager, it was completely normal for me to spend the weekends and summer nights at the dance clubs with my friends and then crash in my bed with a buzz early the next morning. My parents were justifiably concerned and looked for a way to protect me. The building next to my father’s hotel became vacant, so he set up a café and offered me the responsibility of taking care of the business and personnel side of the establishment. At the age of 23, I felt honored that my father trusted me to manage such an undertaking. People loved our café and I soon became well known in Riccione. I liked being the center of attention, be it with our customers or with our staff. I enjoyed being with people and being successful. My job, however, took all my time and energy. We opened at 5:30 in the

morning and closed the next morning at 4:00, seven days a week.

Marco, with whom I have been good friends since I was 20, really wanted to spend more time with me. So, we moved into an apartment together with the hope that it would make our relationship deeper. I gladly would have started a family, but since I was “home” for only a couple of hours during the night, our love could not grow. Marco, understandably, was not ready to marry me under such conditions.

That was the first great defeat in my life, the first time I did not get what I wanted. I spun into a crisis after Marco and I separated. I quit working for three months and returned to my old lifestyle. Finally free, I wanted to live it up. Nevertheless, despite the dance clubs and alcohol, sports, body care and fashionable clothing, I was unhappy. I was uneasy, dissatisfied, frustrated and was very confused about my expectations of life. Although I had been baptized and raised Catholic, the only thing that remained of my faith was that there

must be a higher being, but I was not sure what I should call it. Perhaps Reiki could answer some of my questions. After the first Reiki session though, I knew that it was not the answer. Some of my friends had become Buddhists with the hope of finding a joyful life there. Yet when I saw the relaxation techniques that the others proposed in the meditation group, I was shocked. Then I thought that maybe autogenous training would be the solution to my problems! I was used to doing everything myself. I did not have the slightest idea about a God who could give me what I needed. My aunt, who noticed that I was searching, gave me a book about Medjugorje. I liked it somehow, and my curiosity compelled me to look deeper. So I decided to accept the invitation of a pilgrim group and go to the Queen of Peace.

*I*t was September 2011. I maintained a skeptical disposition throughout the trip. I listened to my music, remained in my world and went everywhere as a critical, distant observer. That is how I passed my days in Medjugorje; I did not experience anything out of the ordinary.

On the return trip in the bus, finally grace was

able to touch me. In a moment, I was given the deep awareness that Our Lady really does exist, and at the same time, she opened my eyes to what I was doing. I understood that all my indulgent pleasures had nothing to do with true happiness, and I recognized that I had a soul for which I had not done anything in years.

I never prayed, I never went to church, I lived from my own strength and according to my ideas, I spent hours taking care of my body, but I never thought about my soul. In spite of this lack of interest, Our Lady was taking care of me. She loved me even though I had ignored her. This was an incredible discovery, and I thought to myself, *“No, I cannot go on living like this. I have to change my life—but how?”* There were so many things wrong.

From that minute forward, I felt like I was indebted to God and Our Lady. I wanted to respond to their love, but I did not know how. I could not call them, I could not give them any material gift; how could I do something to please them? Then I thought, *“I will simply do what Our Lady asks for in Medjugorje. Then I will surely be able to show my love.”*

Just do what she tells us

*W*hen I returned home, I started praying the Rosary every day, going to Holy Mass on Sunday and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation once a month. I immediately felt through this, that I no longer wanted to spend my nights in the dance clubs, that I had to dress and speak differently and that I could not simply let my frustration out on others. Then I joined a prayer group where I learned to know and love Jesus.

Now, I wanted to do what he asks of us. So, I closed the café on Sundays and stopped working until 4:00 in the morning. It was painful for me to realize that I was also guilty that others had fallen into demonic dependencies because for years I had been inviting a fortuneteller on Halloween as a special attraction. I quit doing that as well, having deeply repented and confessed

what I had done. As a result of these decisions, however, the café's income dropped rapidly, but it did not bother me because I had finally found an inner joy that outweighed everything else. At the same time, I recognized that, for many years, I had led the life that others expected of me, but I had never seen myself as Jesus created me and thinks of me.

The more I prayed, the more I discovered who I am and for what I was created—not a businesswoman, but a quite soul. I desired to discover the vocation that Jesus had given to me, because I knew that it was the only way I would ever be happy.

I also understood that I had to end my sexual relationships, but I did not feel strong enough to

live this sacrifice. Whenever I prayed for clarity in this intention, the following words of the Lord came to mind: *“Nothing is impossible for God!”* (Lk. 1:37) And so it was; I received the strength: first, to put the café in someone else’s hands and trust that Our Lady will guide me, and second, to make the decision to live chaste until marriage. At first, my friends all laughed at me, but as they realized with time that I became more sure and consistent, they started listening to me with interest when I told them about Jesus and how he hears my requests. I still had contact with Marco occasionally. I did not want to hide from him either that I was in love with Jesus. My enthusiasm about the Faith made him curious, and so he too started praying and going to Holy Mass. More and more often, we met at church and did something together.

*I*t had always been my dream to have a family. Now I knew, however, that I would only be happy with a Christian husband, and Jesus would have to give him to me because I did not know a man my age who lived his Faith. The more I prayed for the conversion of my future husband, the more I “happened” to run into Marco. When I realized that he was drawn to Jesus, I questioned whether, in the end, the Lord had chosen him for me. When I told him that I had decided to be chaste until marriage, he was very surprised at first, but then he answered, *“I love you so much that I would do anything for you; I’m happy to make this sacrifice too!”*

Our true love story began according to Jesus’ rules and under the protection of Our Lady. It was a beautiful time leading up to our wedding on March 2, 2014, in our parish in Riccione.

*O*ne day, when pilgrims from Naples came to Padre Pio looking for spiritual advice, he sent them home, “Why are you coming to me? You have a holy man in Naples, Fr. Dolindo.” He was referring to Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo (1882-1970). (See Triumph of the Heart #39.) The holy priest, who was very misjudged and even persecuted during his lifetime, left behind rich theological writings. He was ahead of his time as a prophet and spiritual director. To his spiritual children he left this advice, “After I die and you come to my grave, knock. I will answer you even from the grave, ‘Trust in God!’” Monica, who knew about this, trusted in his intercession. During the time she was looking for her future husband, she made a pilgrimage to Fr. Dolindo’s grave and knocked on it three times with the request, “Convert the man that Jesus has chosen for me as my partner, whoever he is!” A few weeks later, they drew saints for New Year’s in their prayer group. Everybody received a piece of paper with the name of a saint who was to be a special spiritual friend and protector for the coming year. Monica thought that Marco might also like to have a saint to accompany him in a special way since she had been seeing him more frequently in the church. So, she took a card for him too. The name written on it was “Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo”. Monica could not believe it, but a little later, she understood very well that it was not by chance.

*M*arco: I met Monica when I was 22 years old. She fascinated me because she was so lively and joyful. All the guys liked her, and so it was a tremendous honor that she noticed me of all people, a shy young man. After the first stage of falling in love had passed, we did not have such an easy relationship. I could not imagine Monica as my wife because she spent her life in her café and we did not have any time for one another. Although it was painful, I was happy when we decided to break up. Monica’s conversion happened during our separation. Even though we hardly ever saw each other, I noticed that, through her new relationship with Our Lady, she had completely changed. It made me curious. With great enthusiasm, she told me about Jesus, and because I loved her, I opened up for this wonderful world of faith. I went to Confession for the first time in decades, and discovered anew the love for Jesus I had when I was a little boy. Since I have taken Jesus into my life, I do not swear anymore and I treat my employees with much greater respect. Thanks to Our Lady, we have found a common ideal and an indescribable inner joy.

*“By making our own the words
of the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth
contained in the Hail Mary, we find ourselves constantly drawn
to seek out afresh in Mary, in her arms and in her heart,
the ‘blessed fruit of her womb.’”*

*Pope St. John Paul II's
Apostolic Letter about the Rosary*