

# faith

Mary as  
mother  
PG. 14

Our Lady  
of Fátima  
PG. 18

Radical  
simplicity  
PG. 22



***The unselfish rarity of  
Ray and Karen Buyle***

## Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

One of the saints that I discovered during my time in Italy is Blessed Chiara "Luce" Badano. Chiara was an Italian teenager who suffered from terminal bone cancer. Amid her suffering, she said, "If this is what you want, Jesus, so do I."

What faith! I think most of us want things from Jesus, but I doubt that many of us want suffering. Suffering is a great mystery, but it is also an incredible gift. The path to heaven goes through the cross. Suffering unites us with Jesus in a very special way. Suffering is not a punishment from God — though I think many people probably feel that way. I have also heard people say that they don't deserve suffering if they have lived good lives.

(St. Paul to the Colossians 1:24) This does not mean that Christ's death on the cross was incomplete with regard to redeeming the whole human race and reuniting it with God. However, there is an aspect of Christ's suffering that is not complete — namely, the application of the merits of Christ's Passion to individual souls. Additionally, St. Augustine said that Christ's Passion is continued in the members of his mys-

tical body as they unite their sufferings to Jesus, the head.

In this issue of *faith* magazine, you will have the opportunity to read the story of Ray Buyle, who has had ALS for many years. I met Ray shortly after I moved to the Diocese of Salina when I attended his prayer group. I saw a man with deep faith and a love for Jesus. What also impressed me is how much his wife, family and friends have loved him through his suffering.

As St. John Paul II said, suffering is a call to love. "Suffering challenges humanity to unleash love and compassion, specifically for those who suffer, transforming the 'world of human suffering' into a 'world of human love.'"

I hope you enjoy the article on Ray and the many other articles in this magazine — including the information on the apparitions of our Blessed Mother. Our Blessed Mother knew suffering too, especially at the foot of the cross. She always said yes to whatever God wanted for her.

May we join her in praying for people who are suffering, especially for those impacted by war and violence. †

In Christ's service,



Most Rev. Gerald L. Vincke,  
Bishop of Salina

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALINA

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## faith

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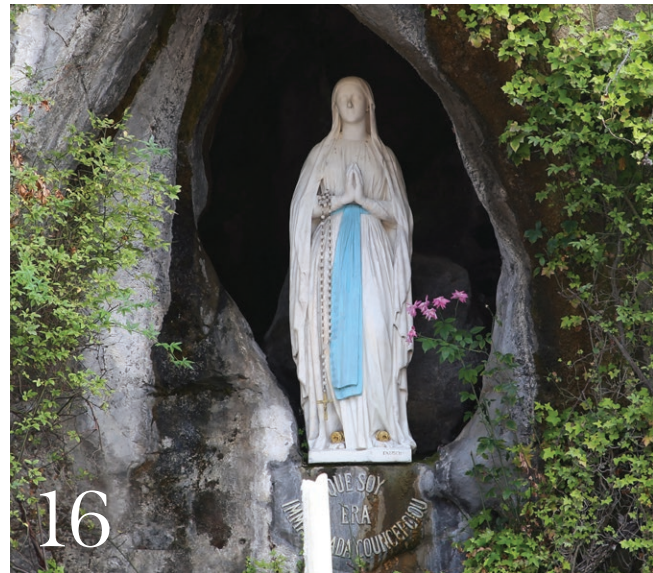


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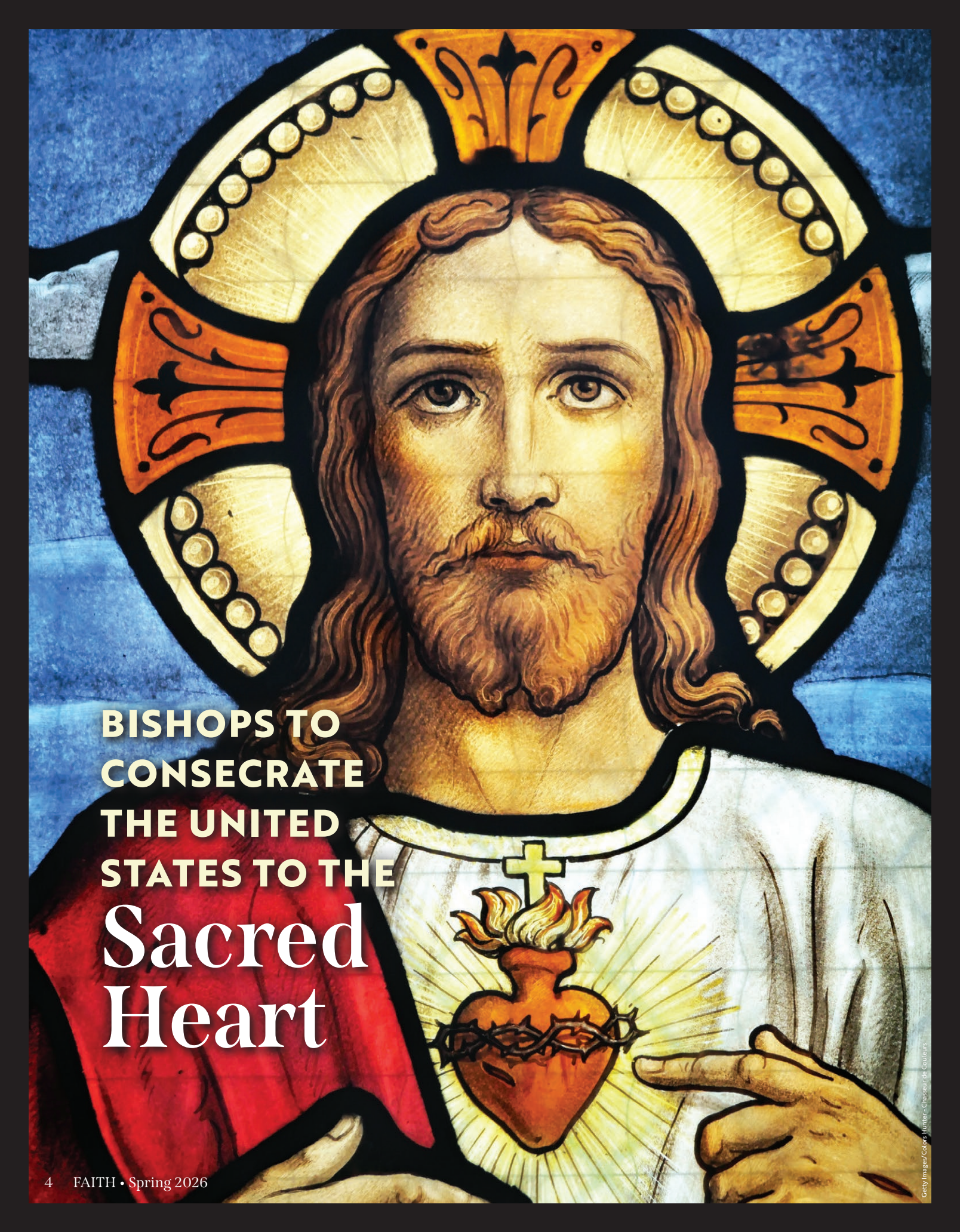
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A detailed stained glass artwork of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The central figure is Jesus with long, wavy brown hair and a full beard, looking directly forward with a serene expression. He is wearing a white tunic with a gold cross on his chest and a red cloak draped over his left shoulder. His right hand is raised, pointing towards the Sacred Heart. The Sacred Heart is depicted as a glowing red heart with a crown of thorns and a flame emerging from the top. The background is a deep blue, and the entire scene is framed by a decorative golden halo with intricate patterns and a scalloped edge.

**BISHOPS TO  
CONSECRATE  
THE UNITED  
STATES TO THE  
Sacred  
Heart**



**A**t their Plenary Assembly this past November, the U.S. Bishops announced plans to consecrate the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The consecration is planned for June 2026, coinciding with the nation's 250th birthday. The bishops invite all parishes to join in this consecration.

Why the Sacred Heart? In his *Reflection on the Consecration to the Sacred Heart*, Archbishop Alexander K. Sample (Portland, Ore.) speaks of the origins of this devotion, noting that it "developed over centuries following the experiences of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 17th century." Since then, popes have "lauded the practice of consecration of the self, home, and even whole nations to the Sacred Heart," seeing it as a powerful "way to recognize the kingship of Christ." Archbishop Sample also added that this consecration is an opportunity to "infuse the spirit of the Gospel" into our parishes and communities.

In a 2024 encyclical, Pope Francis wrote: "In contemplating the pierced heart of the Lord ... we too are inspired to be more attentive to the suffering and needs of others." Drawing on this theme, Archbishop Sample writes that "As we reflect with gratitude on the blessings God has bestowed on our country, our devotion to the Sacred Heart demands that we consider how we might foster truth, justice, and charity in American life."

Archbishop Sample concluded by saying that "this anniversary and consecration will be a great opportunity to promote the beautiful devotion to the Sacred Heart and to encourage the laity to offer their lives in service to God and their country." †

## ON THE OCCASION OF THE U.S. BISHOPS CONSECRATING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:

You know the longings of our hearts, and you desire that we enjoy friendship with you.

From your pierced side, you have poured out the wellspring of life, for which we thirst.

Your heart burns with a love for all people to return to a right relationship with you.

We celebrate the abundant gifts you have given this nation, founded on the self-evident truths that our Creator has endowed all people with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We make reparation for the offenses against you and against human dignity that have taken place in this nation.

May our hearts be united to yours, so that our families and communities enjoy peace and happiness; may broken relationships be reconciled, injustices repaired, and the wounds of our land be healed.

May your holy Catholic Church serve as a sign, pointing all people to your infinite love.

O Desire of Nations and Center of History, we ask you to bless these United States of America.

Who live and reign with God the Father

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
have mercy on us!

Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
pray for us!

## HISTORY OF THE DEVOTION

In 1673, at a small monastery in eastern France belonging to the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque began experiencing visions of the Sacred Heart that continued for 18 months.

During her visions, she learned ways to venerate the Sacred Heart of Christ. These devotions included a Holy Hour on Thursdays, the creation of the feast of the Sacred Heart and the reception of the Eucharist on the first Friday of every month.

On June 16, 1675, Jesus told Sister Margaret Mary to promote a feast that honored His Sacred Heart. He also gave Sister Margaret Mary 12 promises to all who venerated and promoted the devotion of the Sacred Heart.

In 1856, Blessed Pius IX designated the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi as the feast of the Sacred Heart for the universal Church.

## THE PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS TO ST. MARGARET MARY

1. "I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their homes.
3. I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge during life and, above all, in death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
6. Sinners will find in My Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Lukewarm souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
9. I will bless every place in which an image of My Heart is exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart.
12. I promise you in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in My disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment." †

**"IN CONTEMPLATING THE PIERCED HEART OF THE LORD ... WE TOO ARE INSPIRED TO BE MORE ATTENTIVE TO THE SUFFERING AND NEEDS OF OTHERS."**

— POPE FRANCIS

*Apparition to Marguerite Marie Alacoque by Francesco Podesti (1800–1895).*



# Enthroning Christ

## AT THE HEART OF THE HOME

BY DEACON BILL MEAGHER



Getty Images/SawcreamStudio

**O**n June 12, 2026, the bishops of the United States will consecrate our great nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That's a powerful moment for the Church — but it's also an invitation. It's an invitation for each of us to respond personally, beginning right in our own homes.

One of the most meaningful ways to do that is through the consecration and enthronement of our homes to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

### WHAT IS A HOME CONSECRATION?

Consecration is a sacred act by which we dedicate ourselves, or something entrusted to us, to God. When we consecrate our home, we intentionally place our family life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and entrust ourselves to the care of His Mother. The enthronement of the Sacred Heart is a long-standing devotion in the Church, strongly encouraged by Pope Pius XII. At its heart, it's simple. We place an image of the Sacred Heart in a place of honor in our home as a sign that Christ is not just part of our lives; He is at the center of them.

When we include devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we recognize something the Church has always taught — that we come most securely to Jesus through His Mother.

This isn't just a symbol or a nice tradition. It's a decision. It's a way of saying, as a family, "Christ belongs at the center of this home."

## WHY CONSECRATE THE HOME?

As a deacon, I've seen how easy it is for family life to become busy, scattered and pulled in a dozen different directions. Even good things can crowd out what matters most.

Consecrating the home is a way of bringing everything back into focus. Through this act, families:

- **Invite Christ into the ordinary moments of daily life**
- **Make a renewed commitment to prayer in the home**
- **Ask for the grace to live with charity, forgiveness and unity**
- **Place their struggles, joys and future into God's hands**

The Sacred Heart reminds us that Christ's love is real, personal and poured out for us on the Cross. The Immaculate Heart of Mary shows us what it looks like to trust God completely. Together, they give us both a model to follow and a place to turn when life is difficult.

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## HOW TO CONSECRATE YOUR HOME

The good news is that this is something any family can do. It doesn't have to be complicated, and it can happen at any time.

■ **Prepare your home and hearts** — Choose a place in your home where the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary will be clearly visible. Take some time as a family to pray and, if possible, go to confession beforehand.

■ **Gather for prayer** — Bring your family together. If a priest or deacon is available, you can invite him, but it is not required.

■ **Proclaim the Word of God** — Read aloud a passage like John 19:31–37, which recalls the pierced Heart of Christ, and helps root what you are doing in Scripture.

■ **Pray the Act of Consecration** — Recite one of the consecration prayers provided or offer a prayer from the heart to formally dedicate your home and your family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

■ **Enthroned the images** — Place the images in their place of honor as a visible reminder that Christ is at the center of your home.

■ **Live it daily** — This isn't meant to be a one-time moment. It's something you live out through prayer, trust and the way you love one another each day.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION or additional resources to consecrate your home, visit [salinadiocese.org](http://salinadiocese.org)**





“

The Sacred Heart reminds us that Christ’s love is real, personal and poured out for us on the Cross. The Immaculate Heart of Mary shows us what it looks like to trust God completely. Together, they give us both a model to follow and a place to turn when life is difficult.”

#### **WHY IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO DO THIS?**

When our bishops consecrate our nation on June 12, they are entrusting our country to the Heart of Christ. But the renewal of our nation begins much closer to home – with our families.

The Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. That’s why we call the home the “domestic church.” What happens in the home matters deeply.

Consecrating your home is a simple but powerful way to live that out.

Please consider consecrating your home, placing your family in the loving care of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Let Christ truly be at the center of your family life, and trust that He will take care of the rest. †



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT**

[salinadiocese.org/office/family-consecration-to-the-sacred-heart-of-jesus/](https://salinadiocese.org/office/family-consecration-to-the-sacred-heart-of-jesus/) or use the QR code.

**Ray and Karen at a KSU football game.**  
Season ticket holders for 39 years.



## *The unselfish rarity of* Ray and Karen Buyle

BY KATIE HAMEL

**K**aren Buyle returned home one day to discover her husband, Ray, standing patiently amid a smoke-filled kitchen waiting for the oven timer to go off. It wasn't food that he was cooking, but shingles. Ray had been replacing shingles on their roof, but the cold weather was impeding the shingles flexibility, so Ray's practical and ingenious solution, much to Karen's dismay, was to use the oven to warm them up.

Albeit a technically practical solution, Karen's sound logic that if the outside weather wasn't sufficient for shingling a roof that day, perhaps Ray should find a different project to work on prevailed. The oven was turned off and the roofing halted, on that day anyway.

While the oven-shingle incident was a one-off event, it was not uncommon for Ray to be working on some aspect of their home. In over four decades of marriage, Ray and Karen bought several beautiful homes and made them even more so. A staple in their decor was plastic sheeting hung in every home they ever lived in, separating the latest construction zone from the rest of the house.

It wasn't surprising that Ray took such an eager interest in renovations and updates to their home. Professionally, he worked as project manager in construction. His work took him and Karen, and later their four children, on several cross-country moves. Growing up an Army brat, Ray was used to moving. But he jokes that he and Karen moved almost as many times since they married as he did growing up.

Ray's family moved to Manhattan when he was in seventh grade. There he remained through graduation and later college at Kansas State University. He met Karen, a native of St. Francis, Kan., through many Newman Center-sponsored events. It was a friendship that blossomed into romance with the couple marrying at St. Isidore Parish in Manhattan in 1984. Then began their life of children, adventure and cross-country moves.

Like any family, life wasn't always easy. There were years of meager finances and lay-offs. Though money was sparse, Ray was able to provide for his family, allowing Karen the opportunity to stay at home to juggle having multiple kids in diapers all at once. But their Catholic faith grounded them, and Ray guided his family with the wisdom his own parents had imparted to him. God, first. Family, second. Country, third.

Ultimately, the family landed back in Kansas. They spent 21 years in Topeka before relocating to Manhattan



**Ray and Karen's wedding, August 18, 1984, St. Isidore Catholic Church, Manhattan.**

in 2007. Ray took a job at Kansas State University as an instructor in the Architectural Engineering and Construction Science department, later becoming a professor and department head. Karen continued teaching multiple grades and serving as a reading specialist during her last eight years of teaching.



**Celebrating their daughter's wedding.**

Life was good. It always had been. Their family was well provided for. They were generous with their faith and with others. They kept on with their full, ordinary lives.

But in late 2022, Ray began experiencing some symptoms that warranted a visit to the doctor.

They ran some scans, noticed he had fractures in his spine, performed an operation and began physical therapy. But the symptoms weren't addressed by the surgery and con-

tinued to worsen. Ray's dominant left hand began to grow weak. They looked for answers and were met with one neither of them ever expected.

In February 2023, Ray was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

Often called Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS is a progressive, fatal, neurodegenerative disease that causes loss of voluntary muscle control. It was a punch in the gut for the couple. But it was a punch that was met with grace.



**The Buyles' first 8 grandkids in 2016. Liam, the oldest, graduates from high school this May.**

**The Buyles' first 11 grandkids at City Park in Manhattan in 2021.**



Every night, I think about how blessed I truly am. I pray for God to help me carry my cross. I pray His will is done and for me to trust His plan for me. His plan is perfect. I know it.”

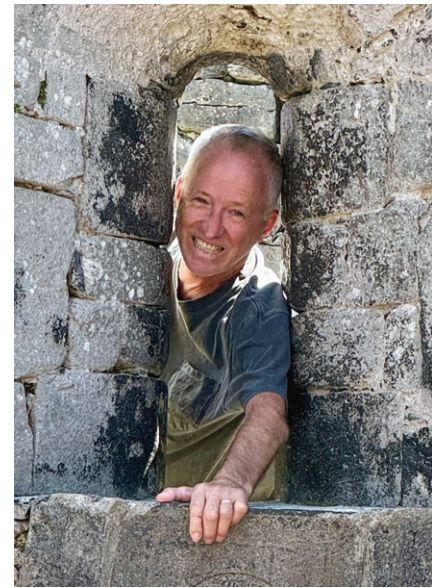
– Ray Buyle

The God that had been good to them their entire lives would continue to be good to them. Not every day is perfect in acceptance of the cross they have been given. There are days of fear and anger. But their cross has been a unifying one.

Upon receiving the diagnosis, they shared the news with family and friends. Everyone came. Everyone offered help and aid. Everyone laughed and cried. Family from both sides, friends from childhood, friends from college – they were all there.

Ray and Karen are the kind of people you rally around. They are the kind of people whose village includes everyone who ever had the honor of knowing them.

The diagnosis changed their life in a hard way, but it has all been for good. And the couple begins and ends their days the way they always have, in prayer. Ray shares, “Every night, I think about how blessed I truly am. I pray for God to help me carry my cross. I pray His will is done and for me to trust His plan for me. His plan is perfect. I know it.”



Ray squeezing through the narrow window at Teampall Chaomhan church on Inisheer Island, Ireland.

### A gift from Mary

Upon receiving the diagnosis, Ray and Karen decided to take the trips they had put off for “one day.” One such trip was to Italy in October of 2025. The trip was beautiful and invigorating, and the couple returned home tired, but feeling blessed. At that time, they were living with Ray’s parents, Ken and Kathy Buyle, due to accessibility accommodations happening at their recently purchased townhome. His mother has Parkinson’s and his father passed away from leukemia early in January, 2026. It was a godsend to be with them during this tragic turn of events.

Shortly after their return from Italy, Ray lost his ability to speak. Weeks went by in silence. Karen shares, “I hadn’t heard his voice in over a month. But one day, having just returned from Mass, Ray was sitting with his Mom in the living room. She was anxious, and Ray whispered to her that they say a rosary together. As I was cleaning the kitchen, I suddenly stopped. Because for the first time in weeks, I heard Ray speak.

And his first words were words of prayer.” †



The prayer group together with Bishop Vincke for a healing service. This group was founded in 2000.



## ***A reflection from lifelong friend, Brad Fagan***

Being one of Ray and Karen's oldest friends, I was asked to write about them and how I've seen their faith work through their lives. My first thought was how difficult this was going to be because they rarely talk about matters of faith and the things they do in that regard, in the same way nobody

shares that they brushed their teeth in the morning. Ray and Karen's faith is a part of who they are. It's not a big deal.

My friendship with Ray began when we were 12 years old. His family moved across the street from mine in Manhattan. Within the first year of having met, Ray

and I got into a fist fight, my first one ever. I'm not even sure what it was about. But we got over it and have had tons of great adventures since. 53 years later, Ray is still one of my very best friends.

Ray's faith was always important to him. When we later both attended K-State, he embraced it even more, whereas I fell away from it. Ray made a point to be involved in all the Newman Club activities, which is how he actually met Karen. I had to lose a few bets before I would be involved.

The thing about Ray is he surrounded himself with good people. There are seven men specifically that he became roommates with. They were predominantly Catholic and faith was a part of their home. Those same men remain lifelong friends for both Ray and myself. Those friends, and their families and friends, have all become a village of sorts.

When Ray told me he had ALS, all I could do was hug him. It was right after daily Mass out on the steps. As the news was shared, we all came. We all wanted to help however we were able to. Once a month, us guys all get together to talk about life and faith. And even though life has changed so drastically for Ray, he is still there with his good humor and helping hand.

I've always known Ray and Karen to have a deep faith. But they are so much more involved and dedicated than I ever realized. If I took the time to write down every way they've served the Church or their community, this article would be too long to read. But anything and everything you can probably think to be involved in and serve on, they have probably done. They are so generous with their faith, their talents and their lives. It's just a part of who they are.

I often will reflect on the unselfishness and rarity of these people. They are good and wonderful, and I am blessed more than I can say by knowing them.



# MARY AS *mother*

BY KATIE HAMEL

*"I think of these moments and more, everything it means to be a mom.  
And then I think of Mary and wonder if she felt all these same moments too.  
And when I think about that, she doesn't seem as far away."*

I've written before about how hard it was for me to relate to Mary until I became a mother. She seemed untouchable, perfect. And so I left her alone.

When I became a mom, that changed. There are little moments intrinsic to every motherhood. My knowledge of these moments is only as old as my oldest, so three years of motherhood is what I have to offer. But when I think of being a mom, I think of those private moments. The ones where you feel your baby dance in your womb. Sometimes ballet, sometimes break dancing.

I think of that smile. The one your five-month-old gives you when he looks up and sees you looking down. That blissful, happy recognition that envelopes his face as he beams back up at you. At Mom.

I think of the dance parties and the "Mom, watch me!" The kissing away owies. The chattering. The constant offers of hindering help.

I think of the hard moments, too. The ones where if one more person touches you or needs something, you just might burst into a flaming volcanic eruption of pure rage. I think of the bathroom hideouts where you go for just a single moment of solitude. I think of sneaking into the pantry to eat a cookie and praying that your kids don't find you.

I think of these moments and more, everything it means to be a mom. And then I think of Mary and wonder if she felt all these same moments too. And when I think about that, she doesn't seem as far away. So, since becoming a mother, Mary has seemed more relatable to me.

But recently, I was reminded that, while yes, I can relate to Mary as a mother, she still remains as my own mother, and I her child.

Last year, Nathaniel and I participated in the Million Memorare challenge for the jubilee year of hope. We prayed a Memorare every night. For a while, we debated about what our intention should be. On the one hand,

I felt like it needed to be something noble and grand. But on the other, the thing that we really desperately were in need of and hoping for wasn't noble or grand. It was simple and ordinary.

We needed a house.

So, we decided to pray for one.

The first house we had bought was a good starter home, but with our growing family and growing needs, we knew that something needed to change. We discussed our hopes, our needs, our wants and our non-negotiables. With these in mind, we prayed that something would come available, and when it did, we'd be brave enough to say yes to it.

We spent the next 11 months praying a Memorare every night and absolutely nothing happened. Then one night in December, Nathaniel and I looked at each other and asked aloud if we should stop looking and instead make our current place work for our family. Maybe that is what God wanted for us?

I kid you not, the next day, out of the blue, we were contacted about a house. With the lowest of expectations, we decided to go and take a look. To our shock and astonishment, the house was an answer to prayer. While it might not have been everything we had hoped for, it was easily everything we needed. Mary had interceded for us.

I'm still in bewildered amazement at it all. I remember how silly I felt asking her for a house. Who does that?

But the more I've reflected on it, the



more I've realized that children do that.

Children ask for things, uninhibited and without ceasing. With innocent persistence, children ask, and mothers answer.

Mary answers.

I'm glad to have been reminded that she truly is my mother. Even writing that feels a little strange, but it is true. It's true for all of us.

You'll notice that this issue has three articles on Marian apparitions. They are all awesome and surprising in their own ways, but they also have a detail in common. Each time Mary appears, she looks and speaks in the custom and dialect of the visionary. She appears in a way that is relatable. She speaks to them in their own language, the way a mother would. A simple proof that she truly is a mother to all.

I hope you enjoy reading the stories of the Marian apparitions, and as you do, I hope you remember that the beautiful lady in these stories loves and cherishes you, intercedes for you, and is waiting for you to ask her for even the littlest of things.

Blessed Mary, ever-Virgin, please pray for us. †

# Our Lady of Lourdes

## AND THE SAINT WHO KNEW HER

BY KATIE HAMEL

On Jan. 7, 1844, in the unknown town of Lourdes located in the Pyrenees Mountains in the south of France, Bernadette Soubirous was born Marie-Bernarde. She was the daughter of a miller and the oldest of nine children. Bernadette was slight in build, standing only 4' 7". Her small stature could be attributed to the fact that she was a sickly child, having contracted cholera as a toddler and being a life-long sufferer of chronic asthma.

During her early years of life, France fell on hard times. Bernadette and her family were victims of extreme poverty and were reduced to living in a one-room basement they referred to as *le cachot* (the dungeon). She spoke very little French, as her first language was Occitan, a native dialect. And due to frequent illness, her reading and writing were fairly limited.

By all accounts, Bernadette was a simple peasant girl who was called to lead a simple life.

But at the age of 14, something happened to Bernadette that would change everything.



Studio photograph of Bernadette Soubirous (age 14) in daily attire. (c.1 January 1858). Author unknown.



Painting of the apparition of Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous in the Grotto at Massabielle near Lourdes.

### THE DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED

On Feb. 11, 1858, Bernadette was collecting firewood with one of her sisters and a friend. The three girls stood in front of a little grotto, a small cave, where a trickling stream ran near. The other two girls plunged into the water, moving forward in their search for firewood. Bernadette, however, stayed behind, opting to look for a way to cross without getting her stockings wet. She sat down to take off her shoes when she was overcome by the sound of a rushing wind.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The body of Bernadette has been declared incorrupt, meaning it is preserved from decomposition. She has been placed in a glass reliquary in Nevers, France, and you can view her today. She looks as though she is merely asleep.

But though the wind roared, nothing moved except for a wild rose that danced within the grotto. Suddenly, from that very niche "came a dazzling light and a white figure." Bernadette would later describe the figure as a "small young lady near the age of twelve" who was dressed in white with a blue sash and adorned with a yellow rose upon each foot.

With trembling hands, Bernadette reached for her rosary and began to pray. When she had finished, the lady vanished.

The lady would later request that Bernadette return every day for the next 14 days, to which Bernadette gave her word that she would continue to do so.

People in the town and surrounding villages began to hear of the strange little girl who claimed to see a lady in a cave. Onlookers flocked to the area, but no one saw the

lady. Some ardently believed that Bernadette was indeed truthful and wondered if it was the Blessed Virgin Mary. Others demanded Bernadette be committed to an asylum, thinking her mentally ill. Parties from both sides would gather to watch Bernadette as she knelt in a trancelike state in front of the empty niche within the grotto.

Regardless, Bernadette continued her prayerful, meditative visits, reporting that the lady insistently spoke of the need for prayer and penance.

On the eighth visit (Feb. 25), the lady instructed Bernadette "to drink of the water of the spring, to wash in it and to eat the herb that grew there" as an act of penance. However, there was no spring. Bernadette began digging, scratching the earth with her hands and eating the herbs as the lady had commanded. Eventually, a muddied puddle appeared. Unhesitantly, Bernadette drank. And the next day, to the amazement of those gathered, a spring of clear water flowed within the grotto.

The lady would also later request that near the grotto,

"a chapel should be built and a procession formed."

On her sixteenth visit (March 25), Bernadette asked the lady her name, to which the lady kindly smiled before eventually responding in Bernadette's native Occitan, "*Que soy era immaculada councepciou.*" (I am the Immaculate Conception.)

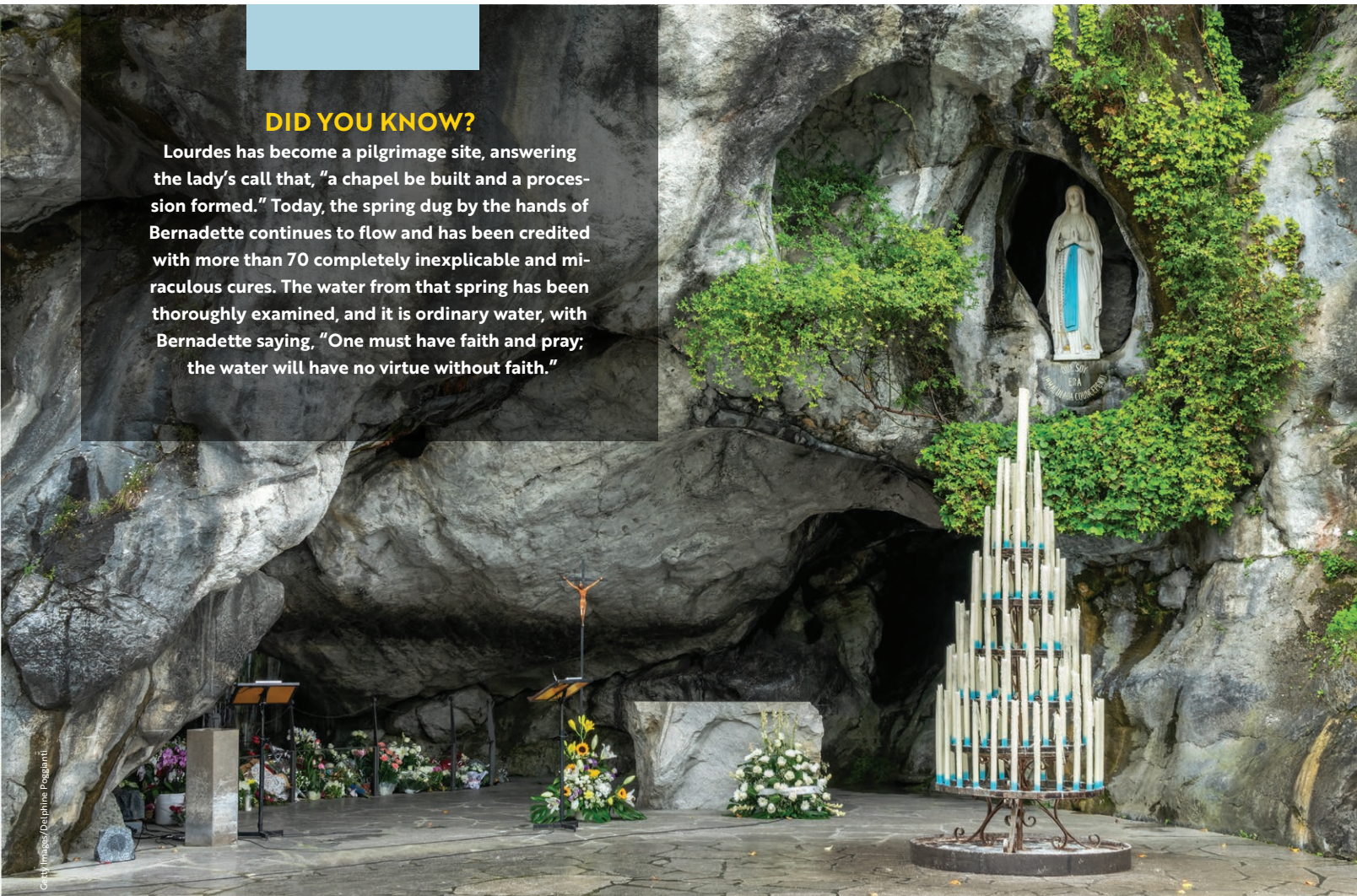
She would only see the Immaculate Conception two more times after that, her final visit occurring on July 16.

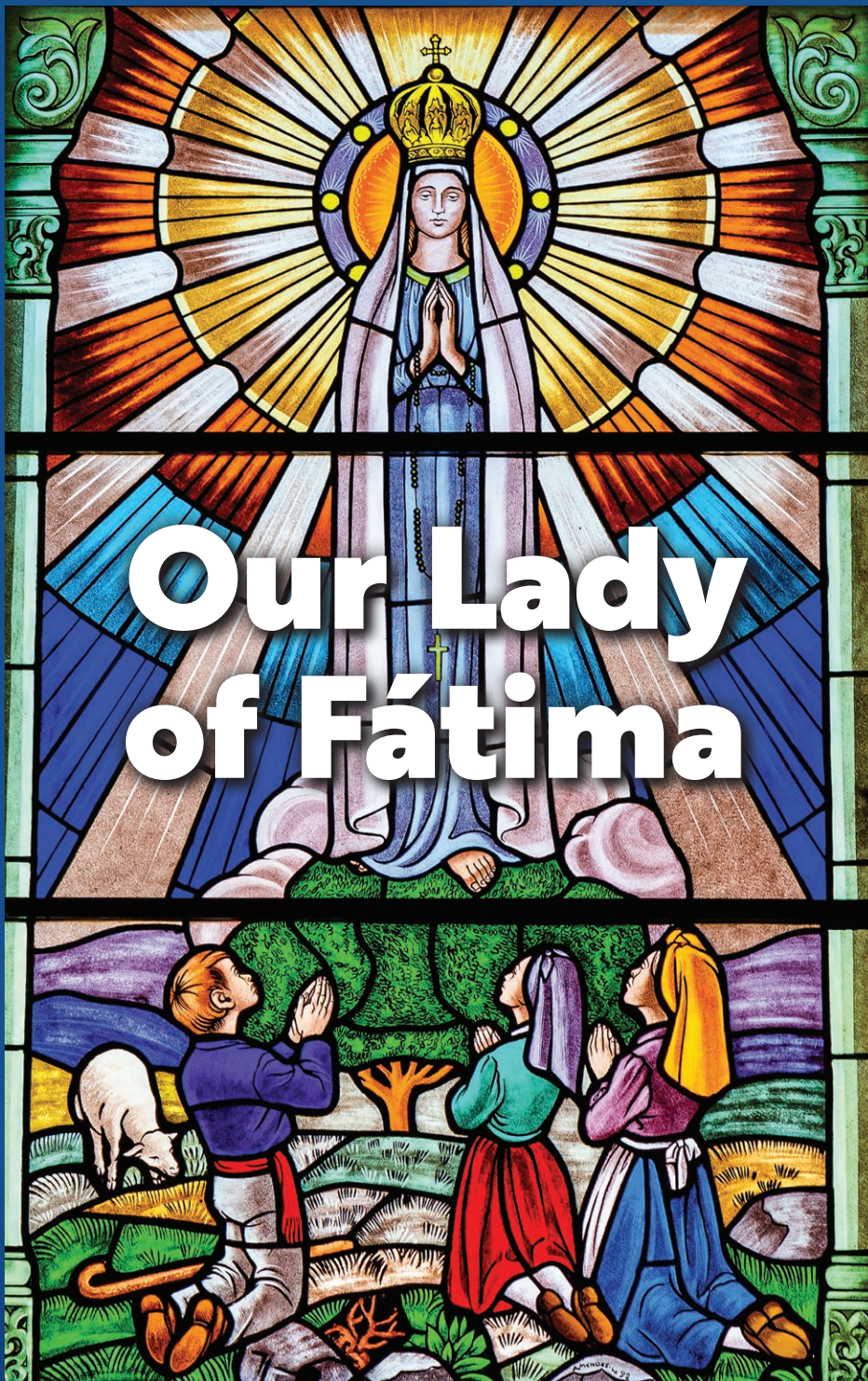
Bernadette's life following would be a simple one as a postulant of the Sisters of Charity. But her time on earth was brief. Due to the effects of her childhood illness, she eventually contracted tuberculosis and passed away on April 16, 1879, at the young age of 35. Her final words were, "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, pray for me." At her death, the bells tolled and religious and lay alike took to the streets declaring, "The saint is dead."

Bernadette would later be named a saint by Pope Pius XI. She was canonized on Dec. 8, 1933 — the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. †

### DID YOU KNOW?

Lourdes has become a pilgrimage site, answering the lady's call that, "a chapel be built and a procession formed." Today, the spring dug by the hands of Bernadette continues to flow and has been credited with more than 70 completely inexplicable and miraculous cures. The water from that spring has been thoroughly examined, and it is ordinary water, with Bernadette saying, "One must have faith and pray; the water will have no virtue without faith."





Cathy Images/Pedro Emanuel Pereira

BY KATIE HAMEL

In the pleasant and unassuming spring of 1917, three shepherd children, siblings Lúcia and Francisco dos Santos along with cousin Jacinta Marto, tended to their sheep in Cova da Iria, the fields owned by the dos Santos family, located outside of Fátima, Portugal. The children frequently pastured their sheep in these fields, and it was not unusual to see them frolicking among the ewes and the lambs.

But on May 13, 1917, at Cova da Iria, the three children encountered an apparition of a beautiful lady. They claimed she was made of light more brilliant than the sun, “shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal goblet filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun.” She wore a white mantle edged with gold, and in her hands, cradled a rosary.

She beseeched the children to not be afraid of her as she had come to them from heaven. She requested that the children return near the same day of the following five months near the same time so that she might speak to them. The children agreed and clamored to ask her questions, chief among them if they each would one day go to heaven. She assured them that they would, but first they must say many rosaries, pray for the conversion of sinners and accept many sufferings.

The children would continue their visits, and many things would be revealed to them, including three secrets. Her primary message was of prayer and penance. She ardently begged the children to pray the rosary daily, promising that the Great War (World War I) would end soon should they do so.

The news of the mysterious lady began to spread, and controversy was rampant. Many believed the children while many others thought it a ruse. The lady informed the children that on her sixth and final visit, which was set to occur on Oct. 13, 1917, she would reveal her name and promised a miracle so that others might believe as well.

### ***Miracle of the sun***

The ground was drenched with rain that had been pouring from the sky. Dark clouds blackened the horizon, and a crowd of hundreds of thousands stood gathered in a field, watching and waiting. Eyes fixated on the three small shepherd children who had declared a lady more brilliant than

the sun would perform a miracle that would make all believe.

No one else saw this mysterious lady the children spoke of. Later, they would learn that she told the children her name was “Lady of the Rosary.” But for the moment, they continued to wait in the downpour. Suddenly, the rain ceased. The dark clouds broke and the sun appeared as an opaque disc, spinning rapidly, faster and faster, in the sky. Its light had dimmed, and it began to cast multicolored lights across the earth. A prism of color danced across the faces of the awed crowd below. Then suddenly, the sun careened towards the earth. Flying down, then around. Moving from its fixed point within the sky, the sun appeared to dance. Its rays cast down upon the earth and dried the soaked clothes of those who watched and the wet ground below their feet. Finally, the sun returned to its place in the sky.

Not all gathered reported seeing the sun dance. Some only saw the rainbow of lights cascading across the field. Others saw nothing at all.

But the sun danced for more than just some of the faithful who stood in

the field. Testimonies of the rainbow lights and dancing sun were reported in towns throughout the countryside.

The story of the dancing sun and the accounts of the children spread throughout the world. After a canonical inquiry, the Bishop of Leiria-Fátima officially declared the visions of Fátima as “worthy of belief” in October 1930.

### ***The three secrets of Fátima (revealed to the children during the July apparition)***

#### **FIRST SECRET**

##### **■ A vision of Hell**

The lady asked for penance on behalf of sinners, going so far as to show the children a vision of Hell so that they might know the suffering that awaits those who stray from God.

“[Mary] opened her hands once more, as she had done the two previous months. The rays [of light] appeared to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a vast sea of fire. Plunged in this fire, we saw the demons and the souls [of the damned].”

“The latter were like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, having human forms. They were floating about in that conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames which issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke. Now they fell back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fright (it must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me).”

**Lúcia Santos, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, the three children to whom the Virgin Mary revealed her famous “three secrets” in Fátima, Portugal, circa October 1917.**

#### **SECOND SECRET**

##### **■ Consecration to Russia**

The lady recommended that the world be devoted to her Immaculate Heart as a way to save souls and bring peace. Doing so would end the Great War, but the lady warned that an even worse war would come if people continued to offend God. There would be a great sign before the second war — a night illuminated by a great unknown light. But should Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart, there would be peace. If not, Russia would “spread her errors” (understood to be communism) throughout the world.

On Jan. 25, 1938, an aurora borealis appeared in the northern hemisphere, the widest occurrence since the 1700s. One month later, Hitler seized Austria, and World War II would officially begin on Sept. 1, 1939.

Later, following the war, Russia would be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on July 7, 1952, by Pope Pius XII. Pope St. John Paul II would also consecrate the entire world to the Virgin Mary in 1984.

#### **THIRD SECRET**

##### **■ Persecution in the 20th century**

The children saw a vision of the lady with an angel nearby. The angel held a flaming sword in his hand, crying out ‘Penance, penance, penance.’ Below him on the ground stood what appeared to be the Holy Father surrounded by priests, religious and lay, all walking up a steep mountain towards a cross. The crowd painfully made their way to the foot of the cross, praying for souls along the way. Upon reaching the cross, they were struck down by soldiers. Angels came and took the blood of the martyrs, sprinkling it over the souls as they made their way to God.

The Vatican has interpreted this vision as referring to the 20th century persecution of the Church, including the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope St. John Paul II. †



Attributed to Joshua Benoliel, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

BY KATIE  
HAMEL

# ROSES *in* WINTER *Our Lady of Guadalupe*



Basilica of Notre Dame du Rosaire in Lourdes, France.

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## **FIRST APPARITION (DEC. 9):**

At dawn on Dec. 9, 1531, Juan Diego, an Aztec convert, was going to the village of Tiatelolco to attend catechism class and holy Mass. As he was passing Tepeyac Hill, he saw birds on the summit and heard the strains of celestial music. Filled with wonder and curiosity, he stopped. Hearing a dainty voice beseeching him to climb to the top of the hill, he did. Upon rising at its crest, he saw the Blessed Virgin Mary standing in heavenly splendor in the midst of a glorious light. He was filled with unspeakable happiness as she spoke to him in his native language.

She revealed that she was the perfect and ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the one, true God. She shared her desire to have a shrine built at Tepeyac Hill so that she could share her love, compassion and protection, "For I am

your merciful Mother. To you and to all mankind who love me and trust in me to invoke my help."

She instructed Juan Diego to go to Bishop Zumarraga and share her wishes for a shrine.

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## **SECOND APPARITION (DEC. 9):**

Juan Diego did as he was asked and went to speak to the bishop. Understandably, the bishop was skeptical. Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac Hill where he found the Blessed Virgin waiting for him. She encouraged him to try again the next day.

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## **THIRD APPARITION (DEC. 10):**

Juan Diego approached the bishop a second time and was instructed to ask the lady for an irrefutable sign that she was who she claimed to be. Juan Diego went to the lady, and she

assured him that the next morning, she would give a sign so that the bishop might believe.

However, the morning of Dec. 11, Juan Diego did not keep his promise to meet with the Blessed Virgin. Upon hearing that his uncle, Juan Bernardino, was taken with a severe and sudden illness, he rushed to take care of him. In doing so, he missed his meeting with Mary.

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## **FOURTH APPARITION (DEC. 12):**

Juan Diego journeyed this day to collect a priest for his dying uncle. Not wanting to be approached by the lady as he had broken his promise to meet her, he avoided Tepeyac Hill. But she intercepted him and asked where he had been. She listened as he shared his fear and woe about his uncle. When he had finished speaking, she said,

"It is well, littlest and dearest of my sons, but now listen to me. Do not let anything afflict you and be not afraid of illness or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Are you not in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need? Do not fear for your uncle, for he is not going to die. Be assured ... he is already well."

Filled with joy at her promise, Juan Diego asked her for the sign to take to the bishop. The lady bade him go to the summit of Tepeyac hill to gather flowers. Juan Diego did as he was asked, although there should not have been any flowers blooming in the barren winter on its stony summit. However, at the top of the hill, he found a garden of dew-covered blooms of Castille roses, a flower not native to Mexico.

He took the flowers to the lady, who arranged them within his *tilmàtli* (cloak). She told him to show the flowers to the archbishop.

When Juan Diego stood before the archbishop, he opened his cloak to reveal the miraculous flowers. But as the roses fell to the ground, it was not they that captured the eyes of the archbishop, but rather what they uncovered. For emblazoned upon the once blank interior of the cloak of a peasant was a marvelously wrought, exquisitely colored portrait image of the Blessed Virgin, exactly as Juan Diego had described.

### **FIFTH APPARITION (DEC. 12):**

The fifth and final apparition was to Juan Bernardino. The lady appeared by his bedside and prayed. He was restored to full health, just as she had promised. She instructed him to tell the bishop of his miraculous recovery and to share that she should be called "Santa Maria de Guadalupe" (Our Lady of Guadalupe).

## **THE SACRED IMAGE**

Juan Diego's cloak is handwoven from the fibers of a Maguey cactus. The image stands roughly 4.5 feet tall and has remained vibrant and lovely for nearly 500 years. The image itself is a codex, a picture where every detail is symbolic. The tilma occupies a place of honor behind the main altar of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It can still be viewed today.

Her **hair**, parted in the middle and hanging loose, indicates she is a virgin maiden.

Upon microscopic lens, scientists have discovered that her **eyes** hold a reflection. There are 13 people reflected in her eyes, including Bishop Zumarraga and Juan Diego.

In the center of the medallion on the upper part of her dress is a **cross**. This demonstrates her consecration to her Son, Jesus.

The **colors and decorations of her garments** prove that she is a woman of heaven and earth. The reddish tunic symbolizes earth, while the star-speckled green-blue mantle symbolizes heaven. Additionally, the mantle signifies her status as royalty, as only Aztec royals could wear cloaks of that color.

The **eight-petaled flowers** on her tunic symbolize the day of new creation. It is also called a "hill-flower," which represents a hill being the highest point of encounter between God and man. Viewed **upside down** the flower looks like a heart, signifying the source of life belongs to and has its origin in God.

The lady stands on a **crescent moon**, which was the symbol of the Aztec god, Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent moon god.

An **angel with eagle wings** supports the Mother of God. The eagle is a "bird of the sun." Wearing a same-colored tunic as the lady, along with a similar brooch, the angel holds her mantle in one hand and her tunic in another, signifying that her Son is from both heaven and earth.

The **stars** on her mantle signify her heavenly origins. And the constellations match exactly what the stars in the sky would have been before dawn on the morning of Dec. 12, 1531.

Her **praying hands** indicate that she is not God, and that there is one greater than she. Her fingers point upwards to the cross on her brooch.

The **dark ribbon over her womb** indicates that she is pregnant.

The **four-petaled jasmine flower over her womb** is the Aztec symbol of the divine and center of the cosmic order. This signifies that her son would be divine and the true center of the universe.

She is **among the clouds**, signifying again her divine origin.

She **stands in front of the sun**. The sun was the symbol of the greatest Aztec god, Huitzilopochtli. She stands before it, announcing there is a God greater than the Aztec sun god. †





# RADICAL Simplicity

BY JODY WEIS

**W**hen I discovered an oasis of slow living, I was captivated. Protected from the world's frantic pace, time in this refuge drifted gently. No internet. No phone. No noise. Without the usual demands on my attention, there was suddenly space for rest and silence. The peace awakened a craving that surprised me. Within the walls of this Carmelite convent, I witnessed a radical simplicity I longed to embrace wholeheartedly.

Simplifying my life as a married layperson has not been easy. Reassessing priorities and shifting family rhythms has required intentionality and commitment as social pressures, relationship dynamics and the world's noise threaten to overwhelm us. Yet as my husband and I build a new foundation, we are experiencing a life that is better rested, increasingly receptive and more deeply connected to God and to others.

## ■ PRIORITIZE REST

Rest is a rare commodity in our culture of stressed-out living. Our high tolerance for exhaustion makes it easy to forget we are worthy of the rest we need. But God did not create us for hectic living. *"Near restful waters He leads me, to revive my ... spirit."* If we examine our lifestyle and take steps to reduce commitments and redesign our routines, we can make real changes which prioritize our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual rest.

Consider making a list of all your

daily activities for one week. Identify top-priority activities, including sleep, eating quality meals and going to Mass. Next identify activities you would be sad to pause but could if circumstances demanded it. Authentic rest includes a balance of life-giving leisure activities and physical rest. Finally, examine what remains on your list. Where are you or your family overcommitted? Can you find one or two activities to let go? Ask the Lord to help you see where you can make space and simplify. Remember, you are worthy of rest!

## ■ PROTECT SILENCE

Receptivity is a fundamental part of human existence despite our tendency to overlook it. It is easy to take for granted each breath and heartbeat given us by God. Yet God invites us to embrace our dependent nature, cultivating our receptive disposition by protecting silence, something the world and the enemy are eager to devour.

How do we protect silence in our life? Clear out the unnecessary noise.

Unfortunately, noise in our world is not always easy to identify. TV, radio and background music inundate us with auditory noise, while unrelenting advertisements and consumeristic clutter batter us with visual noise. And still another kind of noise threatens our silence: interior noise — the swirl of worries, the obsession over people's opinions, and the fixation on our never-ending tasks. However, if we become aware of the noise in our life and proactively decrease it, we safeguard silence and make space to receive whatever God offers us.

## ■ BE PRESENT

Many of us consider multitasking a badge of honor, but today, multitasking has become an addiction that impacts our relationships. Connection either strengthens or fades in the present moment, and when our attention is divided, we compromise our engagement with God, with others and with ourselves. Some states in life do require a certain level of multitasking, but by slowing down and reprioritizing our focus, we can live more meaningfully in the present moment.

Transformation begins when we recognize our habits. Examining how your multitasking might be out of balance opens you to the Holy Spirit's guidance. If self-reflection is tough, consider asking people closest to you. Then invite the Lord to show you how to be more present and cultivate the invaluable connections awaiting you.

We may not live in a convent, but you and I can still anchor our home life in radical simplicity. As God opens our eyes to this treasure and we prioritize rest, protect silence, and live in the present moment, we become rich in what truly matters. †

*Jody Weis is a wife, mother and spiritual mentor.*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 23:2-3, Revised Grail Psalter



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*call to share*



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Jamie Kuhlman, Assistant Director of Youth Ministry, sees the impact firsthand.

“Prayer and Action gives young people the opportunity to put their faith into action. They begin each day in prayer and Mass, grounding their work in Christ, and then spend the day serving others in our communities, repairing homes, helping those in need, and learning what it means to love their neighbor.

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