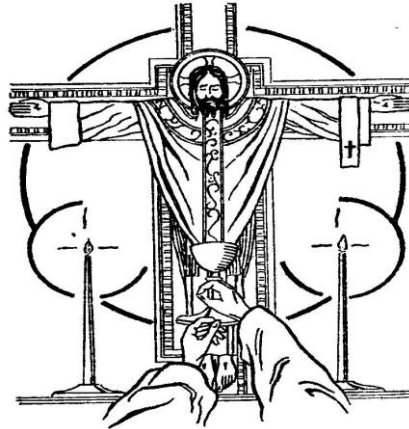


Paul F. Leibold, a Holy Priest and Bishop
A Priest After Jesus' Own Heart!
A Beloved Son of Mary!



THE † ETERNAL † SACRIFICE

**(Design from Holy Card in remembrance of
Most. Rev. Bishop Paul F. Leibold's Silver Jubilee of ordination to the
priesthood-1940-1965)**

On June 19th of 2009, the feast of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope Benedict XVI announced the “**Year for Priests.**” With that announcement and the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John (Jean-Baptiste-Marie) Vianney, His Holiness likewise declared **St. John Vianney the Universal Patron of Priests.** St. John Vianney, born near Lyon, France on May 8, 1786, is certainly an example to all priests on how to live up to the sanctity and dignity of their sacred calling. We have all heard stories about John's very average intelligence as a young person and about his difficulties with his studies. He was in an ecclesiastical school with the intent to pursue a vocation to the priesthood when France went to war with Spain. Napoleon removed the exemption for ecclesiastical students and John was conscripted into the service. While he was in church on the morning of his day of departure his comrades left without him. The guide who was to help him catch up to the men led him instead to a town with many deserters where he was persuaded to stay and become the schoolteacher, thus making him a deserter as well. In order to spare him the penalty of desertion, his younger brother agreed to serve in his place. In 1812 John entered the seminary but did not pass the test to enter the seminary proper; however, three months later he did pass and on August 13, 1815 he was ordained to the priesthood. Although he found worldly studies and Latin difficult, John had good common sense and was advanced in spiritual

knowledge and in the practice of virtue. By 1818 he was made the parish priest of Ars, and because of his ability to touch souls, many were converted from both near and afar. St. John Vianney endured many attacks from Satan but was always victorious over the evil one. In the later years of his life it is said that he spent 16-18 hours a day in the confessional, and that he could divine sins in an imperfect confession. He practiced great mortification and exuded a deep sense of faith and love. He died August 4, 1859 at age 73. On October 3, 1874 Pope Pius IX declared him venerable and in 1925 he was canonized by Pope Pius XI. His feast is his date of death, August 4.

Reference: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08326c.htm>

On June 19th of this year, that **“Year for Priests”** will officially end, but we trust that the prayers for our priests that it has called forth from the hearts of the faithful will never end. May the life of St. John Vianney be an inspiration to all priests on surrendering to the Will of God and on how to guard themselves against the attacks of Satan through the power of prayer and penance and the intercession of our Blessed Mother. Satan’s effort to destroy the Church will not end until the world ends, but we have Jesus’ word that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **Satan’s greatest effort will be to undermine our priests, the shepherds, and thus scatter the flock. Like the Good Shepherd, the priest is called to lay down his life for his flock.** In making Jesus’ gift of His life--His Sacrifice on Calvary-- present on every altar, the priest becomes an **alter-Christus, another Christ**. Like the High Priest of old, the priest is the bridge, the intermediary between God and His people. He is the one who offers sacrifice, the Perfect Sacrifice, for the atonement of sin and for the redemption of all mankind. He is the one who intercedes for God’s people. He is the one who absolves sin when presiding in the place of Jesus Who is the One Who truly forgives all sin. May Jesus be the very life and love of every priest, for they are His chosen ones, and as Jesus is the beloved son of His Mother, so they, too, Jesus’ brothers in the Spirit, are the **“beloved sons” of Mary** as well.

How fitting it is, then, that Our Lady should come and give her own exhortation to our priests whom she expressly addresses as her **“beloved sons”** at a time when the priesthood is under so great an attack and so many of her **“beloved sons”** have fallen prey to the evil one’s assaults.

Exactly one year after Our Lady had first appeared to visionary Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil under this new image of Our Lady of America®, Our Lady again came to Sister with these precious words for our priests, her **“beloved sons,”** and asked that they **be the especially loved imitators of the Son of God, the Eternal High Priest** Who is also the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for all sin.

My dear daughter, sweet child, write my words carefully, because they are of the utmost importance. I address them to my beloved sons,

the priests, dedicated to the most intense and extraordinary imitation of my Son in the perfect carrying on of His Eternal Priesthood.

Beloved sons, so cherished and greatly blessed among the sons of men, be careful to uphold the sanctity and dignity of your calling. Let the faithful see in you the favored and especially loved imitators of the Son of God. Be modest in your dress and speech as becomes those of so exalted a vocation. The apparel and manners of a man of the world is not for you, who, though living in the world, must not take on its ways.

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, *Our Lady of America*©, Fostoria, Ohio, pg. 20, September 26-27, 1957.)

Our Lady admonishes her priests to live a life of penance and self-denial and thereby be a fitting example to the people they serve. St. John Vianney's life is certainly testimony to such a life. Self-denial and prayer are necessary for sanctification from within to take place, for the priest to be an unmistakable example of holiness for the flock he tends, and for him to gain the efficacious grace needed to stand boldly against Satan in every assault against himself, the priesthood and Christ's Church. Mother Mary continues:

It is through you that the grace of the Sacraments is given to souls. Strive then to make yourselves worthy receptacles to receive these graces and transmit them in turn to the souls under your care.

Dear sons, I ask you to practice self-denial and penance in a special manner, because it is you who must lead my children in the way of peace. Yet this peace will come only by way of the sword, the flaming sword of love. If, therefore, you love my Son and wish to honor me, heed my admonition and be the first to give the example of a life of penance and self-denial. Thus, by sanctification from within you, you will become a bright and burning light to the faithful, who look to you for help and guidance. (Diary, pg. 20)

Our Lady speaks of her pleasure in the devotion of her loyal priests, but she wants even more from them and bids them take her words to heart and do as she asks.

I am pleased, dearly beloved sons, by the honor and love you have until now accorded me. Will you now go further and honor me yet more by taking my words to your hearts and doing what I ask? (Diary, pg. 20.)

This exhortation from Our Lady to her beloved sons in September of 1957 echoes the plea our Lord Himself had made earlier to Sister Mildred in February of 1954. Jesus delighted to address Sister Mildred as "My little white dove," a perfect symbol for the humble soul, for the dove is such a small bird and was used as the sacrificial offering of the poor and the lowly. It is a symbol for the Holy Spirit who often works so quietly within

the soul that He goes unnoticed until His baptism of fire explodes in all kinds of blessings through that person out upon others. Jesus, too, begged for prayer and sacrifice from His chosen souls for the conversion of sinners who might be eternally lost if there were no one to pray for them.

Pray, pray, pray, oh My little white dove, pray and sacrifice yourself for the souls of poor sinners. How many are lost because there are no prayers said for them, no sacrifices made for them. Where are your prayers, oh My priests and religious, where are your sacrifices? Do you not know that sinners will not be converted unless prayers and penance call down the grace of God upon them?

My chosen ones, you in particular are responsible for the souls of poor sinners. It is to you I have entrusted them. As their spiritual fathers and mothers, you must care for them and by your unceasing prayers on their behalf, lead them safely to My Father's house.

(Letter from Sister Mildred to Father Leibold, February 22, 1954.)

Jesus chides His chosen ones who forget the great mission He has given them for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. Jesus makes it very clear that His chosen ones are especially called **to make the infinite Love and Mercy of His Heart known to poor sinners.**

Oh my well beloved ones, you have become selfish and thoughtless. You have forgotten the greatness of your responsibilities. Unless you become saints, there will be no hope for poor sinners, for it is My wish that through your sacrificial lives, the souls of poor sinners will be saved.

(Letter of Sister Mildred to Father Leibold, February 22, 1954.)

Oh, the pride of souls! How they resist My grace! O My priests, My religious, what would I not do for you if you would only let me! I come daily laden with graces, which you daily refuse. What am I to say of you, my best beloved? How long will you resist My love? It is from you I expect everything, and you give Me but the husks of your affections. How long will I bear with you, O My chosen ones? How long will you spurn My approaches?

My little white dove, it was this ingratitude on the part of My priests and My religious that caused Me so much sorrow in My passion. Oh, how they resist My grace! How they fight against My love! So fearful are they that I will deprive them of their tawdry trinkets that they turn their backs lest they see the reproach in My eyes. (Diary, pg. 33.)

What words of praise and gratitude our dear Lord has for those priests and chosen ones who live up to their high calling; what sorrow over those who do not. Rev. Paul F. Leibold, later bishop and archbishop, whom God chose to be the spiritual director for Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil in this important devotion to Our Lady of America® is another holy priest and **“beloved son”** of Mary. What blessing and grace Jesus promises Fr. Leibold for his humble and faithful priestly ministry. What priest would not want to hear Jesus call him **“a priest after My own Heart”** and hear Jesus pledge to be with him always and to **“bear the heaviest part of his priestly cross.”** As stated so often in Scripture, God chooses the humble who know they are not worthy of His favor, the ones the world would not choose, and He works his wonders through these lowly souls to the consternation of those whom the world would consider far more fitting. The impossible is always possible with God. **“God does not choose the qualified but qualifies the chosen.”** How tenderly **the Lord bids these two lowly souls, Father Leibold and Sister Mildred, to be pliable in His hands so that a Great Work may be accomplished through them.** The Lord defines Himself as **the Great Sculptor of souls.** Imagine Him chiseling away every flaw in the stone of our own person so we might be sculpted into something beautiful just for God, something so like the image of Himself that we might give the greatest pleasure to our heavenly Father!

My little white dove, tell your spiritual Father, him whom I have placed over you, to guide and direct you, tell him that My Heart is pleased with his efforts to make Me loved. I will bless him and make his work fruitful on behalf of all the souls entrusted to his care and priestly ministrations. Tell him if he would please Me more, to double his efforts in making known the love of My Heart for poor sinners. I ask of him what I continue to ask of you, oh bride of My Heart—prayers and penance. As a priest after My own Heart, I will be with him in all his trials and sorrows. Tell him not to become discouraged at the crosses awaiting him for I, the great High Priest, go before him carrying the heaviest part of his cross.

I seek always the humble and lowly of heart and since I have found two such, so I have entrusted to them a great mission, but become not vain, for I have chosen him and you only because of your unworthiness and lack of virtue. **Let this thought be with you always, that you may remember that it is I working through you, Who sanctify you for His glory and the salvation of your souls. You are poor instruments in My hands, but through you a Great Work will be accomplished. I am the Great Sculptor of souls. With hammer and chisel I form them that they may glorify My Father by their beauty and perfection. Be pliant in My Hands, oh My two lowly ones, My chosen priest and My little white dove, and then will you be formed into My likeness and through you I will be formed in souls.**

(Letter of Sister Mildred to Father Leibold, February 22, 1954.)

In July of 1980 Our Lady addressed the work of her faithful and beloved sons. We can be sure she considered Archbishop Leibold a consolation to herself.

Dear child, there are those of my children who are faithful, among these are my priests and religious who live a life of prayer and dedication to the work of my Son. What a consolation they are to me, with what joy I watch them furthering the Kingdom. But there must be more of such self-sacrificing souls, many, many more. Until this comes to pass, peace will not come, rather much more of suffering will encompass the world. I wish to spare my children from this, but I cannot do it without their help.

(Diary pg. 37)

What kind of a man and priest was Archbishop Paul F. Leibold? Humility was certainly a virtue in him, as was **simplicity, kindness and the deepest respect for the proper lines of authority and for doing the will of God and finding sanctity in the ordinary duties of life.** We have the testimony of Jesus Himself to Father Leibold's humility in the previous quote from Sister's letter. Quotes from Father's letters to Sister Mildred give us a better understanding of his simplicity and holiness. On November 13, 1962, on his return from the Second Vatican Council, Father, now Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, Ohio and Titular Bishop of Trebanna, wrote to Sister Ephrem, the name by which he addressed her:

...I left Rome (as soon as His Grace said "Permission is granted to leave"). ... The Roman experience was of course exceptional – but I do not know when I was ever so glad to get home; you can imagine this little nothing Bishop sitting in the bleachers like a church mouse amazed at the knowledge and erudition of all those mental giants gathered there as they orate day in and day out in Latin. So I was about as useless there as the dust on the rug; I can do the council a lot more good here at home praying for it and doing the ordinary priestly work of which I am somewhat capable. ... I am no world traveler in any sense of the term; so I am more than willing to confine my prayers to St. Louis Church.

[Father Leibold was appointed Auxiliary Bishop at St. Louis Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio April 10, 1958 and Titular Bishop of Trebanna on June 15, 1958. On June 15, 1966 he was installed as Bishop of Evansville, IN and returned to Cincinnati as Archbishop there as of October 2, 1969.]

That humble respect for those in authority over him is also evident in another letter Bishop Leibold had written previously to Sister on April 27, 1961.

You mentioned in [a] previous letter about my avoiding the message. Frankly I was not conscious of avoiding it. As for action – it was submitted to my superior, Archbishop Alter, he gave his answer as far as this diocese [Cincinnati] is concerned, you know what that was; so

you also know that for me that means I follow his decision without question.

In a letter to Sister about sending copies of her Diary to appropriate bishops and the Mother Superior, Bishop Leibold says:

...you know from the very beginning of any contact with me I have consistently been opposed to any actions that were taken more or less outside the orbit of the proper religious superiors; for I am a firm believer in their being an instrument of God in all things (even tho[ugh] many times we think they are just obstacles). I have the utmost confidence in God and His Blessed Mother's care of things that He and she have an interest in (recall how the Montfort revelations were found after centuries, just when Mary wanted them found) – so I have no anxiety about any essentials being lost or destroyed. ...

In addressing the issue of papal approval for the Cloister back in its beginning days, we see Bishop Leibold's belief that all things happen in God's time, when God wills them to come to fruition for His own purpose.

... I am constrained to counsel patience and restraint; I do not know of the life of any Saint who was ever called upon to really accomplish anything worthwhile, which is not marked with what must have seemed at the time like interminable delays and obstacles and misunderstanding; so evidently they are God's ways of trying a work "as if by fire", as St. Paul tells us God does when He wants to fully purify anything.

His February 23, 1960 letter to Sister gives us insight into his simple but genuine spirituality.

I see you are now a weaver – what a joy it must be to ply this trade with a thought of union with Mary as she weaved the cloth for the garments of Jesus and Joseph in the little house of Nazareth, with Jesus playing at her feet and holy Joseph pounding away in the next room, ready to make any repairs that might be called for on her loom. It is interesting to note that in the gospel accounts of the life of Christ, very little is said about the little personal things of his life, how He lived, what he did, where he lived, etc., but the Holy Spirit does take "time out" in the most solemn account of the Gospel, that of the Passion and Death of Christ, to take note of what disposal was made of His garment. It must have been something extraordinary that the soldiers were so concerned to get this garment and indeed that it not be cut up or divided in any way. Then of course in our work how familiar we are with the old story about the cloth with the beautiful picture woven into in, the underside is just a mass of knots and threads, indistinguishable in pattern, while the upper

side depicts a beautiful picture. So you too, while the work in itself may seem so mundane, maybe even useless, but with every thread you are weaving in the sight of God, whose holy will you are doing in the work, a beautiful picture of your soul pleasing and filled with love for Him!

In speaking of being made Bishop of Evansville, Indiana in 1966, he expressed not feeling very fitted for the position but went on to say:

...it does not frighten me, for who can be afraid when they have prayers like your[s] behind them and have as certain a knowledge as is possible here on this earth, that he is doing what God wants him to do. ... I have purchased a little house next to Christ the King rectory in Evansville, so I will be part of a parish set up and not isolated in some ivory tower. I will live there and help in the parish, every day I will go downtown to the Chancery to work in the office there. .. After I live in the house a while I can remodel it a bit for a chapel and other things; but it will be humble and simple.

(Letter of Bishop Leibold to Sister Mildred, May 16, 1966.)

In his November 8, 1963 letter to Sister, Bishop Leibold shares his wisdom with her in regard to the difficulty in getting older sisters attuned to the new cloister life.

... as you well note the greatest difficulty is to establish the true sense of values – how prone those who CLAIM to be seeking perfection are to looking for the extraordinary to do and at the same time complaining about and not accepting the ordinary. The basic principle is: perfection is in doing God's will; God's will is clearly expressed with no doubt in the ordinary things of daily life; when it comes to choosing the extraordinary one is always faced with the doubt, is this God's or my will acting. That is such a simple and basic principle, yet it seems impossible to get it over to souls – we have all kinds of phoney saints who say all sorts of prayers (because THEY like to do it) and then gripe because the gal next to them blows her nose loudly, etc., which is very clearly God's will. Forget the hair shirts and keep the rule, forget the sensational and do the ordinary sensationally well, stop looking for the extraordinary and accept the ordinary – this is God's plan of sanctity.

Oh that we might learn from this humble priest-bishop-son of Mary, so like her, to find sanctity and the will of God in the ordinary duties of daily life and to do them sensationally well. To all who knew him, Archbishop Leibold did exactly that – his ordinary priestly duties sensationally well. He was a priest for thirty-two (32) years and a bishop for fourteen (14). Surely every priest would want to hear such

precious words as Jesus gave to Sister Mildred especially for him as her spiritual director:

**As a priest after My own Heart, I will be with him in all his trials and sorrows.
Tell him not to become discouraged at the crosses awaiting him for I, the great High
Priest, go before him carrying the heaviest part of his cross.**

Archbishop Paul F. Leibold was taken home to God on June 1, 1972

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