

## Images of Our Lady of America Approved by Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil and What She Did to Protect the Integrity of the Message

On the morning of November 15, 1956, Sister wrote in her Diary:

**Our Lady then asked me to draw a picture of her first appearance. She also requested a statue made according to this likeness and placed, after being solemnly carried in procession, in the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. She wishes to be honored there in a special way as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin.** (Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA, Lodi, OH, Pg. 14.)

This is the picture Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil drew. Note how she captured the beautiful smile on Our Lady's face. The lines of her drawing are simple, straight lines. The garments are white and without adornment, except for a gold clasp to hold the cloak together. Her heart, encircled with red roses, symbolic of suffering, shoots forth flames of fire, symbol of love. She is bathed in a soft glow of light. She holds a white lily in her right hand. Her hair and eyes are medium brown. A gold twelve-point crown is on her head. The statue to be enthroned in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., honoring Mary in the shrine she called her own as **"Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin,"** is to be made in this image. Sister Mildred also told her companion contemplative sister that **the statue for enthronement in the National Shrine was to be made by an American artist.**



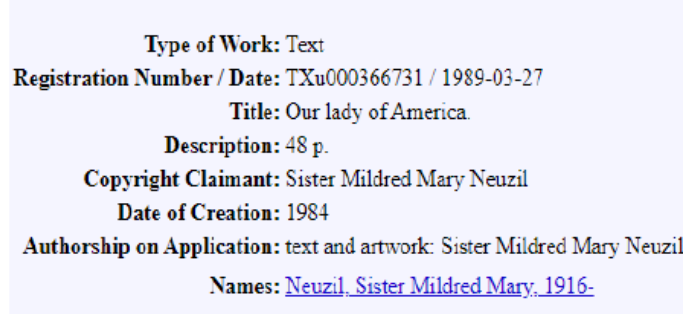
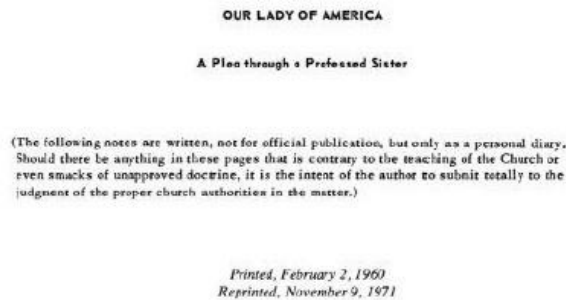
Sister Mildred then drew the picture on the left for the first printed leaflets with the two essential prayers to this devotion, **"Prayer to the Immaculate Conception"** and **"Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity."** The prayer leaflet was approved in 1962 by Bishop George J.



Rehring of the Toledo, Ohio diocese, the diocese we believe has authority over this apparition, for Sister lived in this diocese from May of 1958, when she entered the Our Lady of Nativity Cloister in New Riegel, Ohio, until her death in Fostoria, Ohio, on January 10, 2000. Bishop Rehring also approved the medal and suggested that the prayer **leaflet should accompany the medal and that the doctrine of the Divine Indwelling should be studied so that this devotion would be deeply rooted in one's spiritual life.** Bishop Paul F. Leibold, Sister Mildred's spiritual director, an auxiliary bishop in the archdiocese of Cincinnati, was directed by Bishop Rehring to have the medal struck, as he had already issued an imprimatur on it on May 1, 1961. Bishop Leibold then asked Father Daniel Pilarczyk of Cincinnati to review the prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity. On January 25, 1963, Father Daniel Pilarczyk issued the Nihil Obstat on the prayer, and Bishop Leibold issued the imprimatur on it.

Regarding the Diary, Bishop Leibold helped Sister compile it in a more readable fashion, and since the Cloister had its own printing press, he suggested that they print some copies for religious superiors and Church hierarchy. Prior copies were handwritten or mimeographed and were difficult to read. His February 23, 1960 letter stated what you see noted below: **"On the title page you should add this parenthesis: (The following notes are written, not for official publication, but only as a personal diary)."** In a January 5, 1963 letter relating to the leaflet he states, **"All material is printed only as a personal diary and NOT for official publication.**

**We distinguish between what is “printed” and what is “published”—things printed for private use do not carry imprimatur.** Being “printed, not published,” the Diary would not have come under the Pre-1978 Copyright Law for published manuscripts, and it would not have needed a copyright© notice, as was required on officially published material. **The 1960 and 1971 Diaries (printed, not published) did not carry an imprimatur on page three and did not need a copyright notice, as they were printed for private use only.** The imprimatur on page three of the Diary did not show up until the first published Diary in 1989, which was 48 pages long. See the title page below for the two printings for private use, only 38 pages, and see the registration with the Library of Congress citing creation for the completed 48 page Diary in 1984, published in 1989 after Copyright Law had changed to automatically protect anything as soon as it is written down on any medium, thus needing a © notice only to prevent infringement. Who put the imprimatur post on that



first published Diary in 1989? Archbishop Leibold had already been deceased almost seventeen years! Why in 1989 would there be a 1963 imprimatur? How can a 1963 imprimatur on the Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity be put on the full 48 page Diary when pages 35 through 46 were not written until after Archbishop Leibold’s death, and some messages therein were not given by Our Lady until after his death?

Regarding canonical approval, Archbishop Leibold did what is considered stage 1 and stage 2 approval: helping Sister compile the Diary for easy reading, writing the Foreword, putting his imprimatur on Sister’s sketch of the medal on May 1, 1961 and on the prayer leaflet January 25, 1963, having the medal struck and small statues and plaques made, including two small ivory statues made in India, one of which was sent to the Vatican by way of the Papal Nuncio. Although these actions and his personal letters indicate personal approval, neither he nor Bishop Rehring of Toledo, nor any of the number of bishops who reviewed Sister’s manuscripts, issued a **formal canonical approval letter** on behalf of the Church. In fact, in his April 27, 1961 letter to Sister, Bishop Leibold states: **“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 is concerned, you know what that was; so you also know that for me that means I follow his decision without question.”** Those words suggest Archbishop Karl J. Alter had put a hold on promoting the messages in the Cincinnati diocese. Was he deferring to the Toledo diocese? Did he fear the message would not be well received in the **liberal Post Vatican II (1962-1965) culture of modernization**? When Archbishop Leibold died suddenly on June 1, 1972, his secretary, Father Francis Lammeier, sent all letters between Archbishop Leibold and Sister Mildred back to Sister for safe keeping. The Archbishop had kept them in his home rather than trust them to the diocesan archives.

After Archbishop Leibold's death, Father Edmund Mormon, SVD, (mentioned on page 38 of the Diary), Sister Mildred's new spiritual director, helped her prepare her completed Diary for copyright with the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. so it could be **officially published and**



Type of Work: Visual Material  
Registration Number / Date: VA0000643362 / 1993-09-23  
Title: Our Lady of America.  
Description: Reproduction of watercolor painting.  
Notes: Includes text.  
Copyright Claimant: Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil  
Date of Creation: 1993  
Date of Publication: 1993-07-01  
Authorship on Application: artwork: Donna Mae Halsted.  
Basis of Claim: New Matter: artistic rendition of original painting by Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil.  
Copyright Note: C.O. correspondence.  
Names: [Neuzil, Sister Mildred Mary](#)  
[Halsted, Donna Mae](#)

**distributed to an unrestricted public.** As noted on page 2, the first published Diary was the full 48 page Diary published in 1989, after Archbishop Leibold's death; therefore, it could not have been approved by him. The later messages, given by Our Lady to Sister after his death, were only recorded in the Diary in 1981. Sister copyrighted the Diary a second time in 1993 with a new rendering of her original painting done by American artist, Donna Mae Halsted. See the copy of that Diary and its registration above. Sister Mildred was advised, when it comes to a message from heaven, nothing can be changed, added, or deleted except by proper Church authority, e.g., the local bishop of authority or the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in Rome. Sister Mildred was adamant about protecting the purity of the message as it was given to her by Our Lady and as she recorded it for us and for the Church; thus, the copyright registrations. If any changes were to be made to her Diary, they were to be done by the proper Church authority only. Furthermore, without a copy of a **formal canonical approval letter for the complete 48 page Diary by the proper bishop of authority over this apparition**, we can only conclude that the last stage of approval has not yet been completed. When it comes to a message from heaven, what good is an imprimatur or approval on only part of a message? A letter from Archbishop Leibold's personal secretary, Father Francis Lammeier, said the Archbishop personally accepted the apparition as of heavenly origin, and that, **IF the Archbishop had lived long enough**, he would have moved forward with that formal approval letter. Since the Archbishop worked closely with the Toledo diocese on the medal and the prayer leaflet, we can only assume he would have done the same with the Diary.

In summary, the later messages were recorded on March 10, 1981, even though some refer back to 1960 and onward through 1984. After 1978, copyright notice was not required for protection but was advised to prevent infringement. Since **the Diary was first published in the legal sense of the word in 1989 and properly registered with the Library of Congress, with copyright notice and in a timely manner** as noted on the documents included in this newsletter, and since Archbishop Leibold's letters to Sister clearly state the 1960 and 1971 copies were printed for personal use, not for official publication, how did Sister's Diary end up in public domain? We can only trust that, in God's good time, all will be revealed! May now be the time for this amazing grace to come to fruition, all for the glory of God and the salvation of souls!

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