

The 59th Anniversary of Our Lady of America®

The Two Pillars of Her Message: the Interior Life and Divine Indwelling and the Sanctity and Mission of the Family

It is a terrible misfortune when there is not to be found one really interior soul among all those at the head of important Catholic projects. Then it seems as though the supernatural had undergone an eclipse, and the power of God were in chains. And the saints teach us that, when this happens, a whole nation may fall into a decline, and Providence will seem to have given men a free hand to do all the harm they desire.

(Jean-Baptiste Chautard, *THE SOUL OF THE APOSTOLATE*, Tan Books, 1974.)

Our Blessed Mother first appeared to Sister Mildred Marie Neuzil on September 25, 1956, on the eve of the feast of the North American martyrs **fifty nine (59) years ago**. We are familiar with her first appearance as Our Lady of Lourdes where she had identified herself to Bernadette as **“I am the Immaculate Conception.”** At that first appearance Our Lady promised that **“greater miracles than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima would be granted here in America, the United States in particular, if we would do as she desires.”** Greater, not in quantity but in nature; spiritual rather than physical. The United States had already chosen Mary under her unique title of the Immaculate Conception as patroness of our beloved land. Our beloved Mother, in turn, to show her gratitude for this honor and the devotion of her children in America, appeared under this new image the next day, September 26, and identified herself as: **“I am our Lady of America. I desire that my children honor me, especially by the purity of their lives.”** In those two days Our Lady united the apparition of Lourdes with the apparition to America and acknowledged the Christian foundation of this nation of America in the blood of our North America martyrs. As Bernadette was before her, Sister Mildred Neuzil is one of those really interior souls so important to the Catholic project Our Lady is spearheading through this devotion for the spiritual renewal of the Church and the world, which is in so much need of it.

(Sister Mildred Marie Neuzil, *The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA*, Pgs. 9, 10.)

In December of 1983 E. Michael Jones recounts in an Editorial in *Fidelity* magazine his interview with Sister Mildred. He states that she understood Our Lady's main concern was that Americans come to understand the meaning of the interior life, “the divine presence, the indwelling presence within us of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Sister continued:

“Everybody is supposed to be a contemplative. Everybody should meditate even if it is only a few minutes a day. Sometimes you're in the mood for talking with God. Tell him everything like you'd tell a good friend. Other times you just want to listen. That's where your inspirations come. You can't really know yourself unless you give Him a chance.”

Mr. Jones spoke of the connection between America and the interior life in official Church pronouncements. He referenced Pope Leo's encyclical letter, "*Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*," sent to Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore on January 12, 1899 in response to a biography of Isaac Thomas Hecker which aroused an attitude of intellectual disorder and erroneous practice as regards Catholic doctrine. Pope Leo warned against the spiritual deficiency known as "Americanism," which confuses liberty with license and subjects the immutable deposit of Faith and Divine Revelation to the whims and darkness of men and women's minds, as though the Church in America should be superior to and different from what it is in the rest of the world. He reaffirmed the difference existing between the Church, a divine society, and other human organizations which are of man's making. "Americanism" emphasizes natural virtue over the supernatural, man's will over God's will, man's presumed self-sufficiency over his need for grace, resulting in a culture of relativity and denial of objective Truth. Much like today.

The underlying principle of these new opinions is that, in order to more easily attract those who differ from her, the Church should shape her teachings more in accord with the spirit of the age and relax some of her ancient severity and make some concessions to new opinions. Many think that these concessions should be made not only in regard to ways of living, but even in regard to doctrines which belong to the deposit of the faith. They contend that it would be opportune, in order to gain those who differ from us, to omit certain points of her teaching which are of lesser importance, and to tone down the meaning which the Church has always attached to them. It does not need many words, beloved son, to prove the falsity of these ideas... The Vatican Council says concerning this point: "For the doctrine of faith which God has revealed has not been proposed, like a philosophical invention to be perfected by human ingenuity, but has been delivered as a divine deposit to the Spouse of Christ to be faithfully kept and infallibly declared. Hence that meaning of the sacred dogmas is perpetually to be retained which our Holy Mother, the Church, has once declared, nor is that meaning ever to be departed from under the pretense or pretext of a deeper comprehension of them."

(Constitutio de Fide Catholica, Vatican I, 1870, Chapter iv.)

Contemplation connects us to grace, to the Eternal God Who seeks to dwell intimately within us, keeping both mind and heart rooted in that higher Divine Truth. Jean-Baptiste Chautard speaks of "**the heresy of good works**," a mixed life in which contemplation is strangled by activity, an attitude which denies that Jesus is the source and end of every good work, not ourselves. In contemplation the soul is fed; in the apostolate it gives itself away. St. Gregory the Great spoke of

an inseparably close relation between the so-called "active" and "contemplative" lives, so much so that though one may dominate over the other (and the most perfect state is that in which contemplation dominates) yet in the soul of anyone called by God to high sanctity the life is always essentially a mixture of contemplation (love of God) and action (love of neighbor.) (Chautard, Pg. v.)

Jean-Baptiste Chautard wrote deeply on this inseparable relationship and how we must first be hidden in the "secret of God's face," that is, in His Presence and in the presence of His will, in a life of ceaseless praise. He reminds us that the church is built of living stones, of

saints, and saints are made by the grace of God. The errors of modernism are related to the ascendancy of a materialistic and secular culture that elevates human science above the science of the Divine. Chautard's spirituality is summarized in these words:

“God alone.” Not contemplation, not action, not works, not rest, not this or that particular thing, but God in everything, God in anything, God in His will, God in other men, God present in his own soul. To do whatever God willed, to suffer whatever He willed, that was enough for Dom Chautard, because all he asked was the opportunity to give himself, to give his will, utterly, without recall, to the infinite Wisdom and Love Who created and redeemed us all.” (Chautard, Pg. xv.)

Our Lady of America® spoke to the spiritual starvation that afflicts America and the world when she expressed an anxious concern about our inner lives during her first appearance to Sister Mildred. Can that be why she did not promise miracles of the body as in so many of her other apparitions, but miracles of grace? **“I do not promise miracles of the body, but of the soul”** (Diary. Pg. 10.), miracles of grace by which the Holy Trinity is glorified among men and nations. Our Lady pleaded:

“If souls would place themselves into my keeping I would teach them the way of true love. If men truly loved my Son, they would not quarrel with each other and they would have peace in their own hearts. Peace is from within, not from without. If mankind were at peace with itself, there would be peace in the world. Man will only have peace if he has in his heart that true love of neighbor that springs from a whole-hearted love for my Son.” (Diary, Pg. 16.)

“I wish to gather about me, my tender child, soldier and valiant bearer of the torch, an army of brave lovers, who as my torchbearers will enkindle the fire of divine Love in the souls of men. Only those who are strong in love can become my soldiers to bear aloft, not the sword of destruction, but the sword of fire, the flaming torch of Divine Charity.” (Diary, Pg. 19.)

Our Lady was a model of Divine Charity and hospitality and service. We see her rush to Elizabeth's side when the angel Gabriel announced that her cousin was in her sixth month with child. We can only imagine how she served Jesus and Joseph in their home in Nazareth, and served all who came to their door. We see her service at the wedding feast of Cana, her spiritual comfort to the apostles who were so desolate after they had abandoned their master in His time of greatest need. Even her contemplative prayer was an act of charity as she understood her role as Co-Redemptrix with Christ in the redemption of mankind. She bore every sorrow allotted her and shared in every sorrow that afflicted her Divine Son. Her prayer was a holy communion of contemplation and action, the love of God and the love of neighbor.

Pope Francis has identified with the poor in an unprecedented way in our modern times. He walks among us as a **Persona Christi**, feeling our pain, leading our way, sharing our hopes and our dreams. He stands against all forms of darkness and slavery. He exhibits the radiance of the Indwelling Trinity and the light of Christ that makes people want to reach out and touch him, or his garb, or take a “selfie” with him. He, like Christ, is especially committed to the **anawim**, the poorest and most vulnerable amongst us. He rises at 4:00 a.m. to put prayer at the head of his day of ministry. He most surely ends every day in prayer as well. He speaks of

creating a culture of dialogue and encounter, of solidarity, justice, fraternity and compassion, one which first encounters within the self the living God Who impels one outward from our self-centeredness to care for one another. The Catholic Church has always preached such a doctrine of social justice and charity. On July 25, 2013, while visiting the Community of Varginha, Rio de Janeiro, during World Youth Day, Pope Francis said:

“Dear friends, it is certainly necessary to give bread to the hungry – this is an act of justice. But there is also a deeper hunger, the hunger for a happiness that only God can satisfy, the hunger for dignity. There is neither real promotion of the common good nor real human development when there is ignorance of the fundamental pillars that govern a nation, its non-material goods: *life*, which is a gift of God, a value always to be protected and promoted; the *family*, the foundation of coexistence and a remedy against social fragmentation; *integral education*, which cannot be reduced to the mere transmission of information for purposes of generating profit; *health*, which must seek the integral well-being of the person, including the spiritual dimension, essential for human balance and healthy coexistence; *security*, in the conviction that violence can be overcome only by changing human hearts.”

In 1980 Our Lady of America® spoke to Sister Mildred regarding this hunger for dignity and happiness which stands against an economic humanism that results in a culture of exclusion and rejection of the elderly, the unwanted child, the poor person in the street, the marginalized, all sacrificed on the altar of those modern dogmas of efficiency and pragmatism.

Sweet child, beloved of my Son and cherished by me, my message has not been heeded nor have I yet found one to further the cause of renewal within. The Presence of the trinity within every human being is the focal point, the basis of interior holiness. From this will spring a deep life of prayer and a love for penance as the discipline needed to convert all peoples to a serious preparation for the coming of my Son and His Kingdom.... You must try to make my people understand that the life of God within them is the source of their peace and happiness. There is no other way. This is what my Son came to teach and bring and it was for this He lived and died. Unless this mystery of God’s Presence within is accepted and lived, peace will not come. It is the only way, believe me, my daughter. (Diary, Pg. 37.)

To reiterate, the first focus of the message of Our Lady of America® is the interior life, sanctification of the individual from within through union with the Indwelling Presence of the Most Holy Trinity. The second focus is the sanctification of the family. In a sense the two focuses coincide, for the family is, after all, an “interior,” an enclosed garden, the more so when the weeds of pernicious influences are kept out and its life is allowed to develop its own rhythms. The family is both an image and a vehicle for sanctification from within. Of course, the most perfect family on earth is the Holy Family. Hence, the message of Our Lady of America® intertwines the two trinities, the family of the Heavenly Trinity with the family of the earthly trinity. Our Lady describes the Holy Family as God’s paradise on earth, the tabernacle of His dwelling

amongst us. Every home must become such a tabernacle for the Indwelling God. On November 8, 1954, Our Lady spoke of the family.

“It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men. As in our little home no sin was to be found, so it is the wish of the Heart of my Son and my Immaculate Heart that sin should, as far as possible, be unheard of in the homes of our children. The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then you also, my children you also will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace.” (The Diary, Pg. 8.)

On March 19, 1958, St. Joseph appeared to Sister Mildred, saying:

“Dear child, I was king in the little home of Nazareth, for I sheltered within it the Prince of Peace and the Queen of Heaven. To me they looked for protection and sustenance, and I did not fail them. I received from them the deepest love and reverence, for in me they saw Him Whose place I took over them. ...The imitation of the Holy Family, my child, of the virtues we practiced in our little home at Nazareth is the way for all souls to that peace which comes from God alone and which none other can give.” (Diary, Pg. 28.)

The family is the most fundamental cell of society, its very foundation. Without it the survival of the human race would be at risk. At World Youth Day 2013, on the feast day of Saints Joachim and Anne, grandparents of Jesus, Pope Francis spoke of the importance of grandparents in passing on the religious heritage within the family, and of the need for intergenerational dialogue.

...“Children and the elderly build the future of peoples: children because they lead history forward, the elderly because they transmit the experience and wisdom of their lives.” This relationship and this dialogue between generations is a treasure to be preserved and strengthened.”

“Abide in me and I in you” (Jn 15:4). “I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20). This is what it means to live in the Divine Presence and what enables us to love one another as God has first loved us. The family is the first place where such encounter with Jesus takes place; it is the privileged place for transmitting the faith! Sister Mildred Neuzil experienced this truth in the hidden life of her spiritual family in the cloister where she surrendered her life totally to the will of God. Her humble life is testimony that every good work begins and ends in God. What He has done for and through her will one day reach to the ends of the earth. Let us pray this prayer for every man and woman on earth who seriously seeks the Lord so God may be glorified in His creatures.

O Divine Fire, stir up in all those who have part in Thy apostolate, the flames that transformed those fortunate retreatants in the Upper Room. Then they will be no longer be mere preachers of dogmas or moral theology, but men [and women] living to transfer the Blood of Christ into the souls of men.

Spirit of Light, imprint upon their minds, in characters that can never be erased, this truth: *that their apostolate will be successful only in the measure that they themselves live that supernatural inner life of which Thou art the sovereign PRINCIPLE and Jesus Christ the SOURCE.*

O infinite Charity, make their wills *burn with thirst* for the interior life. Penetrate and flood their hearts with Thy sweetness and strength, and show them that, even here on this earth, there is no *real happiness* except in this life of imitation and sharing in *Thine own life* and in that of the *Heart of Jesus* in the bosom of the Father of all mercy and all kindness. (Chautard, Pgs. 2-3.)

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Fostoria, OH, September 25, 2015,
in honor of Pope Francis' visit to America
and the Convocation on the Family in Philadelphia, September 26, 2015.**

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