



# Friends of Mercy

Marians of the Immaculate Conception  
Association of Marian Helpers • Eden Hill • Stockbridge, MA 01263

## Nurses for Divine Mercy

*Nurses meet need for “total patient” care through special ministry for the sick, injured, and dying.*

**B**y choice, by trade, Marie Romagnano, RN, deals with trauma, catastrophic injuries, death, and dying. What makes most people flinch, only deepens her faith.

No nonsense — tough and tender at once — she seems like most nurses you run across. There’s one significant difference, however. She has all the tools of her trade, plus one: her devotion to Jesus, The Divine Mercy.

### *A link to Jesus*

“From my own work as a catastrophic injury nurse, one assessment I’ve made is that nobody takes care of the spiritual aspects of dying,” says Marie of Charlton, MA. “Yet it is the most important event of a person’s life. The medical profession emphasizes the physical care.”

Back in 2001, with help from her local pastor and a fellow nurse, Marie organized Nurses for Divine Mercy. The growing group of medical professionals dedicates itself to providing medical and spiritual care for the injured, sick, and

dying.

“As a Nurse for Divine Mercy,” says Marie, a registered nurse with a burn and trauma speciality, “you are always aware that you are the spiritual link to Jesus. The most important thing for the nurse to remember,” she says, “is that not only are they ministering with their hands, but they’re ministering with their hearts.”

### *Time for prayer*

Some patients have time to prepare for death. Some don’t. For those who do, Nurses for Divine Mercy offer patients and their families copies of the image of Jesus, The Divine Mercy, with the Chaplet. “The Divine Mercy message and devotion,” says Marie, “gives patients a tremendous amount of hope.”

The nurses often deal with dire situations where there’s no time for prayer. “All you can do is barely keep up with pumping in the IVs, doing what you have to do to save the person’s life,” Marie says. “So how I get around that is that I pick a time of day, before or after work, and say the Chaplet for the intentions of those who will die within the next 24 hours.

### *Spiritual impact*

Nurses for Divine Mercy, which is comprised of about 50 nurses through-



PHOTO BY FELIX CARROLL

**Marie Romagnano, RN, has received training in the Divine Mercy message and devotion from the Marians on Eden Hill since 1984. She is seen here at the grounds of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA.**

out New England and overseas, began as a direct result of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Marie and a group of parish nurses that she heads up were called by the Red Cross to go to New York City after the planes hit the Twin Towers.

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### Prayer Intention for the 3 o'clock Chaplet

**P**lease join in praying for comfort and perseverance for all those who strive to bring Divine Mercy to people whose lives are imperiled.

Nancy Scimone performing "Saint Faustina — Messenger of Mercy" at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy on Oct. 4, 2003. The Shrine observed the saint's feast day on this day.

PHOTO BY FELIX CARROLL



### How did you first hear about St. Faustina and Divine Mercy?

About 10 years ago, Maureen Digan came to my parish and spoke about St. Faustina. (*Maureen's healing through the intercession of Sister Faustina was recognized as the miracle that led to the saint's beatification in 1993.*) After that, I was taking a train up to New York City, and I wanted something different to read. So, after Mass one morning, I picked up a pamphlet on St. Faustina. Then I started hearing about the Divine Mercy. My diocese then had its first Divine Mercy Sunday celebration, and I volunteered to sing the Chaplet. So I started reading St. Faustina's *Diary* over time and felt a bond to her.

### How so?

I found that her trials, though far deeper than the trials I had, were very inspiring — especially how she handled them and how she handled isolation and depended on Jesus. The keys to her peace are obedience and trust, which seems a paradox in today's society.

### How did this performance piece come about?

One morning I was praying and reading a psalm. It was about suffering, and I thought how this was something St. Faustina can relate to. So I started reading the psalm aloud, and the actress in me took over and I started to dramatize it. ... But I was no expert on St.

Faustina, so I prayed for guidance. A very short time after that, my mother told me that a Marian brother was coming to her parish in Maryland to talk on the life of St. Faustina. That's just what I needed to hear. It was Br. Leonard Konopka, MIC. I went to hear him speak, and he was wonderful. Afterwards, I told him about my idea. We met a few times, and what he helped me with was getting the structure and format down.

Particularly, I was able to decide to concentrate on dramatizing St. Faustina's obedience and trust, her love for the Eucharist, her love for Mary, how the Divine Mercy image came to be commissioned, the revelation of the Chaplet and Divine Mercy Sunday, and how she dealt with her physical illnesses. These things we bring out in the drama. It took me almost a year between the time I got the idea and the time I first performed the drama in public.

### As an artist, what was your most important consideration in creating the piece?

I wanted to make it dramatically viable. I wanted all the senses to be involved. A good storyteller will always combine something more literal and tactile with something more metaphorical. Also, being a composer, I wanted to weave the music in with the story. And the music is a vehicle that tells the story in a different way. There are six songs in

# Drama brings saint to *life*

Nancy Scimone was so inspired by St. Faustina that she created a musical drama, "Saint Faustina — Messenger of Mercy." The one-woman, one-hour show highlights significant events in St. Faustina's life and her mission of sharing with the world God's message of mercy.

Nancy, an actress and classically trained musician who lives in Virginia, talks with us about how she was inspired to create the performance piece and what she hopes to impart to her audience.

the program, and many of them are psalms.

### **What is your motivation in performing the piece?**

The fact that I've been inspired, and I want to educate. But the gift I believe I have had since I was a young child is that I love to perform. I love to sing. I love to compose. I'm a classically trained performer. I believe He made me who I am to use my voice, to use my persona in this way.

### **What specifically attracted you to St. Faustina's life?**

I was so attracted to her — as a person, as a young woman who loves the Church, who loves Jesus. But also I was attracted to the message of mercy. Jesus told her that this is the hour of mercy. He urged that we speak to the world about His mercy while there is still time. I felt that this is a job that needs to be done, and it needs to be done now. ... There are also little things about Faustina to which I feel connected ... We both have red hair, for instance (laughing).

### **How can St. Faustina's life serve as inspiration for today's world?**

She really advocates quietude. She really believes in meditation and prayer to hear God's voice. That's something I like to advocate, too. I really believe that in order for each of us to get to the point where we can ask for God's mercy for reparation in our lives, we need to get to

## **Members' Corner**

"I'm just a total child of mercy. In the spirit, I am such a small child before God. I was once broken — in mind and spirit. I mean, I was dead. But God, in His mercy, raised me from the dead. I am the least of His people, and He lifted me up from the very depths of despair — 30 years of depression. I love Him so much." — DP

How has Divine Mercy struck a chord in you? Share with us by e-mail at [friendsofmercy@marian.org](mailto:friendsofmercy@marian.org) or write to us at the Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263, attn: Editorial Dept.

that quiet, cool pool of water. Only there can we realize the disparity between our sinfulness and how we as children of God should be. For me, conversion starts in a very quiet area, and that's a challenge today.

### **How important is it to you to present St. Faustina as a real person to whom everyone may relate?**

My goal is to create the persona of St. Faustina right in front of people and to demystify their illusions that she was born a saint. Yes, she is a chosen soul. However, she had to undergo formation. God had to polish her through suffering and sacrifice. And so what I'm trying to get across to people is that if you think you've done something so terrible that you could never lead a virtuous life and that God would not want you back, the point is, yes, He does. That's why He is offering mercy. St. Faustina says, "Let no soul, even the most miserable, fall prey to doubt; for, as long as one is alive, each one can become a great saint, so great is

## **Nurses**

### **Continued from cover**

"When the buildings collapsed and we realized there would be no survivors, the Red Cross told us we wouldn't be needed," Marie says. "All anyone could do at that point was pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy."

What grew from that was a realization that nurses, in their daily duties, can make a great impact by providing patients with spiritual care through the Divine Mercy message and devotion.

Through years of contact with the Marians on Eden Hill, Marie has become well acquainted with Divine Mercy and the *Diary of St. Faustina*. Marie says she has come to think of St. Faustina as the first Nurse for Divine Mercy.

"When St. Faustina was hospitalized with severe tuberculosis," Marie explains, "she got out of bed to assist a nearby patient who was calling for help. In addition, St. Faustina prayed for the sick and dying, and she obtained the powerful grace of mercy for her 'spiritual patients' in their final moments of life by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy."

### **Spreading devotion**

the power of God's grace" (*Diary*, 283). Hopefully, each person who hears this will realize she was a human being. She had to confront some of the same challenges that we all deal with. ... She relied on the resources of the Church. And these are available for us right now, 75 years after her death. □

**Nancy Scimone is available for performances. Send her an e-mail at [nancymusic@erols.com](mailto:nancymusic@erols.com) or call (703) 913-7559.**

Nurses for Divine Mercy spread the message not only to healthcare professionals, but to patients and their families as well. "At work, I always wear the image of The Divine Mercy on my clothing," she says. "When patients and families become familiarized with the image or ask questions, I take the opportunity to explain it to them."

Marie trains interested nurses in the Divine Mercy devotion. She has written a book with the Marians, titled *Nursing with the Hands of Jesus: A Guide to Nurses for Divine Mercy*. It is scheduled for publication in April and available through the Marian Helpers Center. For information call toll free 1-800-462-7426.

For more information about Nurses for Divine Mercy, call Marie at 508-248-4949, ext. 4. □

# — Mercy at the Front —

by Fr. Donald Van Alstyne, MIC

*In August of 2003, Fr. Donald Van Alstyne, MIC, arrived in Afghanistan to serve as a chaplain in the U.S Army. Having previously served tours of duty in South Korea near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Bosnia, and Hawaii, Fr. Don is now assigned to the 10th Mountain Combat Infantry Division in Kandahar. He provides us with this report of ministering Divine Mercy to our soldiers on the battlefield.*

The Army operation center where I am stationed is called “The Taliban’s Last Stand” (TLS) — a location bombed in Operation Anaconda two years ago when the U.S. first entered the war in Afghanistan. It was at this precise location that the Taliban had its terrorist training center. Morale at our fire bases (defense positions to prevent the terrorists from re-entering Afghanistan) is high because soldiers make a direct link to what the terrorists did to us on 9/11 and its origins with Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda here in Afghanistan.

There are about 11,600 American troops, including Special Forces and Rangers, and approximately 1,400 of these are Catholic. It is from here that I visit by helicopter all the fire bases. I often travel to minister to soldiers at fire base Shkin (a place where most of our casualties have occurred) and where I have ministered to dying soldiers on the battlefield.

I am present with soldiers when they are put in harm’s way — praying with them, offering words of encouragement. Many of our soldiers are in life-threatening surroundings in outposts along the Pakistani border. Oftentimes their locations are rocketed by the Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters who hide in the rugged mountain terrain. Their living conditions are stark with few amenities to distract them from the rigors of their daily regimen. The enemy has wounded some of our soldiers in firefights, and some have lost their lives. On four occasions, I had the sad duty to administer the “Last Rites” to our Catholic soldiers.

Though I nourish our Catholic soldiers with the Sacraments, especially in daily Mass, I am

called to minister to all. My ministry is to help soldiers see the sacredness of their own lives and the lives of others. I strive to help them see that all people are spiritual and seeking meaning in life. My role is to help the soldiers see this reality and to empower them to live a life of selfless service. Like my fellow soldiers in the combat zone, being a chaplain has brought into focus for me the essence of what life is all about — the values, vision, and meaning in life.

All of us soldiers will be changed for the good when we return home because we know we sacrificed so much for what we stand for as Americans. We know we are making a difference in this war on terrorism, and we are confident that our sacrifices will safeguard our country from ever having terrorist attacks like 9/11 happen again on our own soil. □

**The Friends of Mercy Club** is a group of friends of the Marians who want to honor God’s mercy in a special way.

- They help support the Marians’ works of mercy, and receive regular news about the Divine Mercy message;
- Every day the intentions of members are included in our 3 o’clock prayers at the Marian Helpers Center and in the Chaplet at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy; and
- Members pledge a bimonthly gift and receive the Club newsletter published by the Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. 1-800-462-7426. e-mail: friendsofmercy@marian.org

PHOTO COURTESY OF FR. DONALD VAN ALSTYNE, MIC

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