This year we celebrate 25 years with the Marians, as it was in 1998 the St. Stanislaus Kostka Province in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, brought us under their wings as an apostolate. This quarter-century has been a time of great joy for me, and I wouldn’t trade the sacrifices and challenges for anything. I hope that this special edition newsletter will give you a good and nostalgic glimpse of the past 25 years.

“Mercy is love that seeks to lessen the misery of others.”
— Bryan Thatcher, MD
I’ve tried to date things as best I can remember. I have traveled to so many places (most not listed here due to space limitations), have spoken to many churches and at conferences, and have met so many wonderful people and have had so many memorable experiences. The deeply spiritual people I have encountered are the ones that inspire me to keep pushing on.

In 1994, a friend handed me the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska* and, as I began to read it, the words seemed to enlarge and jump out at me. A quote that got me through some difficult personal times was, “The greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to My Mercy” (*Diary*, 723). I began to understand God’s love for me, and I could not keep it to myself.

Our church was forming Small Christian Communities where people met weekly in small groups to discuss the next week’s Gospel reading. I asked our priest if we could study the *Diary of St. Faustina*, and he agreed. That was the start of the first Divine Mercy cenacle. I wrote the first manual and integrated some Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* into the lessons. That was the initial “Cenacle of Divine Mercy,” and things began to happen.

While I was soaking up the information in the *Diary*, another friend sent me a photo of a Eucharistic miracle from Betania, Venezuela. I was unaware of it, and I began to read all I could find on the Real Presence and Eucharistic miracles. In 1994, I took my parents, wife, and our three children to Italy and viewed miracles like Lanciano (1). We saw Cardinal Francis Arinze (2) and joined him for Mass in his apartment. My eyes were opened, and I truly began to understand that Jesus is present in the Eucharist.

In early 1995, I was invited to Samoa and met Cardinal Pio (3). He loved the message and wanted to form cenacles of prayer in the Polynesian islands. I brought him a beautiful pencil etching that Scottish artist Tommy Canning had done, entitled “Mary Mother of the Eucharist.” The people there love Our Lady and were extremely receptive of the message (4). He appointed Fr. Alapati as spiritual guide for the groups, and after his death Rome appointed him as the new Archbishop. And, 25 years later, Samoa hosted the World Congress on Divine Mercy (WACOM) this year.

Later that same year, my son John Paul (5) was born, and 15 months later he survived a near drowning. Many of you know that story, and it is included in the section on “Trust” in Cenacle Formation Manual 1. I began to understand what the words, “Jesus I trust in You,” mean in a much deeper way.

In late 1995, I called the Marians and they said there was no set program of formation for laity. I sent a query to the nuns in Poland, and they said they did not have one either. However, because of the inquiry, my wife Susan and I were invited by Cardinal Macharski to a conference in Poland outside Warsaw at St. Faustina’s convent. It was over the February 22nd weekend in 1996. It was on February 22, 1931, that the Lord first appeared to St. Faustina, and it also happens to be my birthday! There I met Cardinal Macharski and Mother Superior Pauline (6). We had a wonderful trip, and I fell deeper in love with the message of God’s mercy. One of my memories is my wife and I having a snowball fight outside the convent; it was snowing hard, and we didn’t get to do that in Tampa!

Shortly after, I traveled to Stockbridge for a “Fortnight on Divine Mercy,” with speakers Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, Fr. George Kosicki, and Vinny Flynn (7). There I learned more about Divine Mercy, and met more wonderful people like the late Lee Bowers, the late Joe Pallazolla and his wife, Carol, and Ron McBride; he would eventually become a priest and be part of the Marians.
I knew I needed to come under Church authority, and a friend suggested I speak to a Jesuit priest, now Servant of God Fr. John Hardon (8). He had given many talks on the Eucharist which I found to be spiritually rich and rewarding. I traveled to Detroit in 1997 three times and he guided me along. He suggested I consider coming under the Archdiocese of Chicago due to our work on the Eucharist.

A few months later, I spoke to a priest I met while traveling and he invited me to Ghana. There, Bishop Sam welcomed me and I gave talks on Divine Mercy and the Eucharist. I met Fr. John Adade and he said to me, “I have been praying for two years on how to spread Divine Mercy and the Eucharist, and today my prayers have been answered!” Divine Mercy began spreading rapidly, and I helped Father with a trade school for the disabled. Over the next several years, we sent many containers of medical supplies, sewing machines, bicycles for the disabled (9), and religious items. There was a priest from Incarnation Church in Tampa at the time, and the Knights of Columbus from Incarnation helped us prepare and load a container for Father’s village back home (10).

In 1997 I traveled to Fatima and Santarem with my daughters Andrea and Patricia. It was the 750th anniversary of the Eucharistic miracle of Santarem. Ironically, the date of the feast was also Divine Mercy Sunday.

I traveled to Nigeria at the invitation of Bishop Martin (11), and spoke at a large conference in Ibadan. It was a most memorable trip, and the people were hungry to learn all they could about Divine Mercy. We continued filling the shipping containers, and our next stops were Peru and Ecuador. My best friend Jerry traveled with me to Peru, and we spoke at several churches. The photo shows us dropping off antibiotics at a hospital outside Lima (12).

In early 1998 I received a call from Fr. Seraphim, and he suggested that the ministry comes under the authority and guidance of the Marians. We became an apostolate and, in the early 2000s were written in the statutes of the Order in Rome. It was only through the guidance and mentoring of Fr. Seraphim and Fr. Kaz Chwalek, MIC, that I grew in depth in my understanding of the message, and I began to see it as a spirituality and, “A Way of Life.” We have the beautiful devotional aspects, but we must integrate the message in our hearts and live it through forgiveness of others, trust in God, carrying our cross through our trials and sufferings, and being merciful to others.

Father Seraphim helped edit and correct the cenacle manuals, and I remember Father went through several red pens suggesting changes! Keep in mind that I had no theological training and did the best I could do, but the manuals required the efforts and expertise of Fr. Seraphim to make them the most accurate and free of any errors.

In 1998, I made my first trip to the Philippines and met with Fr. Josefino Ramirez, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Manila. He wanted to learn more about EADM and, within a year or so, Fr. Seraphim, Fran Bourdon of the Association of Marian Helpers, and I traveled to the Philippines to host several conferences (13). We went on to Malaysia and spoke there. That trip bore great fruit as, several years later, the Marians established a vicariate in the Philippines and eventually moved the major headquarters from Manila to El Salvador on the island of Mindanao. I traveled to the Philippines three times to evangelize and the people were so kind and loving to me.

In 1999, Pope St. John Paul II gave a special Apostolic Blessing to all Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy and for those who support our efforts, and, also in 1999, gave a special Apostolic Blessing to all those praying a Chaplet during Eucharistic Adoration for those sick and dying in that hour. In 2003, he gave us a third blessing for all those who pray a Chaplet for pro-life causes.

In 1999, I began writing and conversing with an alleged visionary,
Sr. Anna Ali, who was having visions of Jesus during Eucharistic Adoration (14). She added to her name, “Sister Anna Ali of the Most Holy Eucharist.” It has been reported that she began crying tears of blood the last month of her life in 2012. The process towards her possible canonization is in process. I traveled to Kenya in 2001 at her invitation. I met Bishop Korir of the Diocese of Eldoret and spoke and traveled across the country. Because of the generosity of my friend Oscar, we set up a chapel where Adorers would pray the Chaplet during Adoration.

I have a funny memory of the trip — Sister wanted me to meet her mother, and we traveled some distance to her home. As a gift she gave me a live chicken. Obviously, I couldn’t take it on the plane, so I gave it to Bishop Korir!

In the early 2000s I visited Poland and Ukraine with Br. Albin, MIC. I stayed with his family, and while in Ukraine I met Fr. Wanags, MIC. He told me of how he built many churches while Ukraine was under Russian occupation. The people were so kind, and I think it was one of my favorite trips. Ukraine has very fertile soil, and produces much of the world’s wheat (15). We must continue to pray for an end to the war!

We were still doing container work, and in early 2001, we shipped an 18-foot, two-ton statue to Kibeho, Rwanda, to Fr. Leszek Czelusniak, MIC (16). In the next year or so, I traveled to Kibeho with Fr. Seraphim and met Fr. Leszek and the visionary Alphonsine. I learned much about the terrible genocide and Our Lady’s warnings given ten years earlier that the people must change their ways or there would be much bloodshed. The photo shown is of Fr. Seraphim, Fr. Leszek, and Fr. Bogusz in the original chapel where the apparitions took place (17).

I was able to travel to Lichen, Poland several more times, the last in 2007 to be at the beatification of the Founder of the Marians, now St. Stanislaus Papczynski. I was also able to visit St. Faustina’s birthplace.

In 2018, I traveled to the Solomon Islands, located near Papua New Guinea, just north of Australia. Archbishop Christopher Cardone, OP, welcomed me. The people there gave me a lovely tribal welcome (18). I gave a four-day mission on the message of Divine Mercy, the Eucharist, Our Lady, the gift of life, and cenacle formation. Divine Mercy groups will be forming in nearly all of the churches in the three dioceses there. It was a most memorable trip, and I thank the people of the islands for their kindness and hospitality.

Our container work continued until 2020 when, due to increasing world corruption as well as the COVID pandemic, we discontinued those efforts. Over the years, we have shipped more than 150 containers worldwide of donated supplies. It has been a great source of joy for me, and I want to thank all the volunteers who would help load one container after another to get them to ports for shipping.

Since COVID shut down conferences and church missions, I decided to do interviews with priests, nuns, scientists, health care professionals, and laity with great stories. The purpose is to educate people on the gifts of our faith and bring hope to a hurting world. You can view more than 125 interviews or listen to the podcasts at DrBryanThatcher.com

Since COVID has abated, my hopes and plans are to travel to South Sudan in August to speak on Divine Mercy and the Eucharist. I would be remiss if I did not thank Fr. Joe Roesch, MIC, now Superior General of the Marians, for his nearly 20 years of guidance and advising me whenever I needed help. Please pray for him in his new role.

People ask me if I miss being a doctor. I still see myself in a healing ministry, but a spiritual one. As you hopefully can glean from the above, I wouldn’t change anything. I will close with the words of the great American poet, Robert Frost:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
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