

**2020 - The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil**  
**The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Laying of the Foundation Stone for the**  
**Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception**

**Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. (New American Bible, 1 Corinthians 1:26-30.)**

These words are a fitting memorial to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil. Indeed, she was a small one, considered foolish by many around her, not wise by human standards, nonassertive about worldly affairs but more inclined to fade into the background, into the hidden life of contemplation and prayer. Some said that was a waste of time, but she knew otherwise. Prayer is the life blood of any activity for God. We know from her letters that she endured many dark nights of the soul and attacks from Satan, even from the start at Rome City, Indiana, before Our Lady's first appearance. She described Satan's attack like giant claws reaching from behind her head, pulling down on her face and eyes, threatening pain if she did not give up this mission for Our Lady. She prayed the Holy Names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, over and over, as Father (later Archbishop) Paul Leibold, her spiritual director, had taught her. She described the event like being in a "ring of evil" and wanting to jump out the window. It would not be the last of Satan's attacks. Satan never lets any work of God go untried. He has been especially ferocious in his attacks on this devotion over the past 63 years, fomenting division, confusion and half-truths. Perhaps he fears most Our Lady's words that living the mystery of the Divine Indwelling will crush his power over souls.



Archbishop Paul F. Leibold

When St. Michael first appeared to Sister Mildred in 1954, he gave her the palm for victory, the sword to do battle with the world, the self and the devil, and offered her the cross, which she accepted willingly. Often he watched her struggle, then complimented her on a great battle, assuring her he was always there to protect his "little sister," as he called her, if needed. Although Sister's struggles were many, physical and spiritual, peace always emanated from her being, a peace that came from the intimacy she had with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the angels and the Indwelling Trinity. They were more familiar to her than many of us are to our own families. She presumed all religious enjoyed such intimacy with God, the Holy Family and the angels. Many angels were often seen hovering over her as she sat in prayer. Her farewell to those who came to visit was always, "May the angels go with you." Her life is a testimony to the Church's doctrine on the communion of saints.

Mildred Marie Neuzil was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 2, 1916, to Austrian immigrants, John and Anna (Smerda) Neuzil. How fitting that she was baptized at Most Holy Trinity Church, as her life would revolve around that great doctrine and mystery of the Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity. Shortly after her birth, the family moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel parish in Cleveland, Ohio, where her father went from being a gardener for Johann Strauss to becoming a builder of homes.

On September 12, 1930, Mildred entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood at age 14. On August 15, 1933, she took first vows as a professed religious, receiving the name Sister Mary Ephrem, which means "doubly fruitful." Her first assignments were to dioceses in the



jurisdiction of Washington, D.C. where this devotion would be centered. In 1937 she served in the Chancery in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she met Father Paul F. Leibold, the holy priest whom God had ordained to assist her in this sacred cause. There are no accidents with God as we can clearly see by these assignments. Around 1938, as she began to have mystical experiences, she was advised to write them down. Then, on August 15, 1939, Sister Mary Ephrem made her final vows which she lived until the day she died. It was in the 1940's that Sister had locutions with Jesus and Mary concerning the sanctification of the family. Later she came to understand that the family would be sanctified through imitation of the simple virtues of the Holy Family who lived in the Divine Presence, with Jesus always at the center of their lives. Our Lady spoke the following magnificent words to Sister regarding her mission for the sanctification of the family and regarding God's love for her and for the humble soul.

**“Your mission is vast, my child. It reaches to the ends of the earth. It will continue until time is no more, because there will always be the need for the sanctification of the family and of souls. Fear not, small one, for it is through the most unlikely of instruments that God works His wonders. He chooses where the world would not. He makes that possible what the world deems impossible. He stops, where the world would pass on. God has no need of anyone yet He chooses the smallest of the small for His glory.**

**Sweet child, let your humble heart be filled with a great confidence for my Son is in love with your lowliness and simplicity of heart. Make known to souls the preference my Son has for humility. Behold, I, His humble Mother, always looked upon myself as His lowly Handmaid, ready, at all times, to do His bidding. The humble, so greatly loved by Him, are also, in deed and in truth, my children.” (Sister's June 5, 1957 letter to Father Paul F. Leibold.)**

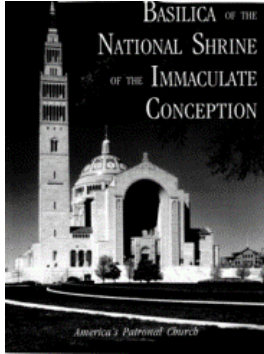
It was September 25, 1956, that Our Lady first appeared to Sister as Our Lady of Lourdes, the Immaculate Conception, on the feast of the North American martyrs whose blood nourished the seed of Faith in America, confirming our religious heritage. Coming first as Our Lady of Lourdes emphasized the gratitude Our Lady gives us for having made her our Patroness as the Immaculate Conception. Coming thus, before Our Lady of America, also shows that it is at her Shrine, our Patronal Church of the American people in Washington, D.C. that she wishes to be honored as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin. She herself has centered this devotion there. She promised miracles greater than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima, if we do as she has asked. Shortly after, Our Lady came holding the world in her hands as she wept over it for its many sins that cry out to heaven for atonement. Our Lady pleaded for prayer and penance, reformation of life, sanctification from within. St. Joseph also appeared, the silent saint, giving many insights into his role in the work of redemption and as protector of the family, the Pope and the Church. All fatherhood is blessed in him. He spoke to Sister of “The Secret of Secrets” of the Divine Indwelling, a gift few are given and which cannot be taught. It was certainly a gift given to Sister.

On October 5, 1956, Sister was inspired to write the Prayer to the Immaculate Conception. On October 13, Our Lady appeared holding a replica of the finished Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, though it was only half finished at that time. Our Lady again centers this devotion in our Patronal Church in Washington, D.C. On November 15, 1956, Sister was asked to draw the image of Our Lady of America. Our Lady then asked that a statue made in this image be carried in solemn procession and then enthroned in our National Shrine, honoring her there under the title of



“Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin.” In May of 1958, Sister Mildred entered the Our Lady of Nativity Cloister within the Sisters of the Precious Blood located in New Riegel, Ohio, the cradle of the community, its first convent here in America

On November 20, 1959, the completed Shrine, a hymn in stone to Our Lady, the largest Catholic Church in the United States and the largest in all of North and South America, the 8<sup>th</sup> largest Catholic Church in the world, was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity and Our Lady. We are confident that one day a statue of Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil will be placed in the Hall of American Saints. When asked if she would be canonized one day, Sister Mildred humbly replied, “Yes, but not because of me but because of the importance of this devotion.” The Trinity Dome, the “Crowning Jewel” of the National Shrine, which honors the Most Holy Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, the four Evangelists, the Nicene Creed and saints associated with the Shrine, was completed in 2017 in time for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone for the Shrine this year of 2020. It gives that vital defining character to the Shrine and to the central doctrine of this devotion to Our Lady of America and of our Catholic Faith. Surely we can see the importance of enthroning the statue of Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin, in her own Shrine!



On May 1, 1961, Bishop Leibold put his imprimatur on the Our Lady of America medallion with the coat of arms of the Christian Family as designed by Sister Mildred. Bishop George J. Rehring of the Toledo, OH diocese approved distribution of the medal with the prayer leaflet that explains it and contains the two essential prayers to this devotion, the Prayer to the Immaculate Conception and the Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity. In 1989, Sister officially had her Diary containing the messages of Our Lady of America published, then republished in 1993 with a more refined image of Our Lady. She remained faithful to her mission to promote this devotion throughout the years of suffering, prayer, and penance for the salvation of souls. She was especially faithful to the interior life and her divine espousal, so much so that Jesus literally asked if she would wear His crown of thorns and would allow Him to nail her to His cross. When she said she could refuse Him nothing, Jesus said, “I have laid you upon the altar of sacrifice.” Sister died on January 10, 2000 and was welcomed into the arms of her Divine Spouse.



**Our Lady's chief adornment is not so much the mission she was called upon to fulfil, as her heart. And so it is with us. What alone really matters is not our outward actions, or our mission in life, but the divine life within our hearts. That is all he cares about. He sees, in a glance, if there is room for him there, and how much room we will give him. ... We must now ask ourselves: is my soul, or is it not, the abode of the Son of God? (Raoul Plus, S.J., GOD WITHIN US, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, Pg. 165.)**

**Copyright© Our Lady of America Devotion, Tiffin, Ohio, January 10, 2020.  
All rights reserved.**

**This site is maintained by a group of faithful Catholics who knew Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil personally and are dedicated to protecting the purity and integrity of the message as given by Our Lady to Sister and as Sister gave it to us.**