



# This Is My Shrine...

*Make it a place of pilgrimage  
and I will make it  
a place of wonders!*

On the eve of the feast of the North American Martyrs, September 25, 1956, as I was making the Holy Hour from 7:00-8:00 p.m., I was conscious of the distinct and special feeling of the presence of Our Lady. She stood by my side and spoke to me. I felt, rather than saw her though I did see a part of her white gown and a small portion of her blue sash. I was under the impression she came as Our Lady of Lourdes, and she herself confirmed this. 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.

(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA, Page 9.)

As noted many times before, it is most significant that Our Lady first appeared on the feast of the North American martyrs whose blood saturated our soil and made it fertile for the seed of Faith to grow. It is also significant that Our Lady first came as Our Lady of Lourdes, a clear gesture of gratitude for the honor we in America give her as our Patroness under her singular privilege of the Immaculate Conception, her name as revealed to Bernadette at Lourdes. It is further significant that Our Lady promised miracles greater than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima. Some erroneously state “greater than Lourdes and Fatima **combined**”, but that is **not** what Our Lady said. She is not speaking of quantity here, but of the very nature of miracles. They will be the **greater miracles of the soul**, so sorely needed in America today if we are to carry out the mandate from heaven to lead the world in a spiritual renewal never before so urgent and so necessary. As she says, these miracles of the soul would be granted to **the United States in particular** if we do as she desires. Let us ponder her words anew.

“I am pleased, my child, with the love and honor my children in America give to me, especially through my glorious and unique privilege of the Immaculate Conception. I promise to reward their love by working through the power of my Son’s Heart and my Immaculate Heart miracles of grace among them. I do not promise miracles of the body, but of the soul.” (The Diary, Pg. 10, vigil of the Martyrs feast.) ... Our Blessed Mother called herself Our Lady of America in response to the love and desire tht reached out for this special title in the hearts of her children in America. This title was the sign of her pleasure at the confidence our land places in her and as a reward for its staunch and childlike devotion to her. (The Diary, Pg. 11.) ...Our Lady, moreover, often emphasized her desire that the Shrine in Washington, D.C, be made a place of special pilgrimage. She wishes to be honored there as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin.” (The Diary, Pg. 1, feast of the Martyrs, Pg 12.)

On October 13, 1956, Our Lady appeared to Sister as she was working in her room. Her presence overwhelmed Sister with its holiness as she wrote what Our Lady desired:

“This is my shrine, my daughter, I am very pleased with it. Tell my children I thank them. Let them finish it quickly and make it a place of pilgrimage. It will be a place of wonders. I promise this. I will bless all those who, either by prayers, labor, or material aid, help to erect this shrine. (The Diary, Pg. 14.)

On November 15, 1956, Our Lady asked Sister to draw a picture of her first appearance and requested a statue made in this likeness to be placed in the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., after being solemnly carried in procession, honoring her there as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin. (*The Diary*, Pg. 14.) On February 11, 1958, Our Lady promised that the statue at the Shrine would be a special safeguard for our country. America, the United States in particular, is being given the tremendous, yet privileged, opportunity to lead all nations in a spiritual renewal never before so necessary, so important, so vital. (*The Dairy*, Pg. 25.)

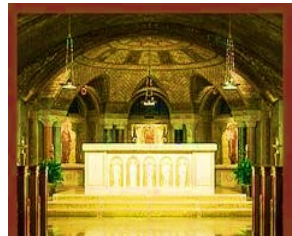
Charles D. Maginnis was the architect for the Shrine; he chose a Romanesque-Byzantine style because it has a spiritual quality in the best tradition of Christian art and architecture. He would build the exterior, and the interior would be done later. The lower Crypt Church was built between 1922 and 1926; work on the interior



would continue until 1931. The first chapel was fittingly that of Our Lady of Lourdes. In 1930 the mosaic reproduction of Murillo's painting of the Immaculate Conception was completed and placed in the Crypt, but



would be installed in the Upper Church later; it is hailed as the **"heart of the National Shrine."** The main altar in the Crypt Church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Catacombs and was the gift of 30,000 women named Mary. It shows Christ in the center with Peter and John to his right and Paul and Andrew to his left. In 1931, **Bishop Thomas Shahan, "Crusader of Mary,"** died; his funeral Mass was offered at the Mary altar and his body laid to rest in the Ave Maria chapel of the Crypt, now called Founder's Hall. Lack of funds prevented the completion of the Upper Church.



Archbishop John Francis Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana, wished to deliver the church from the deterioration and abandonment brought on by war and the Depression. He began to promote its cause through the Sunday Visitor. In 1954, Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle officiated at the ceremony to mark the second phase of construction, building the Upper Church. At the time of Our Lady's appearance to Sister Mildred in 1956, the National Shrine, covered in scaffolding, would have looked



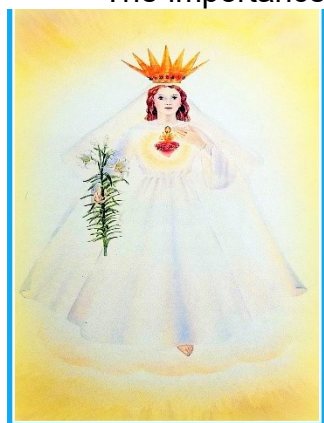
September 23, 1956 — lower part of upper church rises from the scaffolding.

like the picture to the left. No wonder Our Lady asked us to hasten to finish it and said she would reward all who helped do so with their prayers, financial support or labor. She wished to make it a place of wonders. It is the only time in her messages she has asked for a procession and the only place to which she specifically asked to have pilgrimages made.

With so much planning, so many years of work, such dedication to Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception, our Patroness,

is it any wonder this is where Our Lady wants to be honored under the title of our country, Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin, a favor to her children in America at the Church that belongs to all the American people? Sister Mildred wrote how gracious of Our Lady not to burden the people of America, after years of hard times, with a request for another shrine after we had already spent so much money on this one she calls her own!

In the 1990's there was an effort to build a shrine to Our Lady of America in California. Considering that Our Lady's life was one long "fiat" to the Will of God, she would not ask for anything God does not will. Our Lady did not ask for another shrine in California when we were already building this *hymn in stone* to honor her as our Patroness in the place that is both the seat of our government and the center of the Catholic Church in America--Washington, D.C. During the course of her locutions and apparitions, Sister Mildred was assigned to thirteen different places: Washington, D.C.-1933; Chancery, Cincinnati, Ohio-1937; Kneipp Springs, Rome City, Indiana-1947; Missouri and Denver-1948; North Dakota-1949; St. Mark's in Cincinnati, Ohio-1950; Ottawa, Ohio-1953; Arizona-1954. In 1956, the year of Our Lady's first appearance, Sister was assigned to three locations in that one year—Ligonier, Indiana; Kneipp Springs, Rome City, Indiana a second time; and Collegeville, Indiana--meaning she spent only a few months in each place. She was at the Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1957, and lastly, she entered the Our Lady of Nativity Cloister in New Riegel, Ohio in 1958.



The importance of these multiple locations cannot be ignored, for they reaffirm the national character of this apparition, which cannot be minimized. The numerous locations re-emphasize the fact that no one location is more important than any other, even though the first holds that special significance; this is a favor to all of America. Thus, multiple locations keep the emphasis exactly where Our Lady put it, on a national level and at our National Shrine. Since Sister Mildred's death in 2000, efforts have been made to build a shrine in Indiana and one in Ohio. Our Lady did not ask for a shrine in any of the places where she appeared, nor anywhere else. If Jesus obeyed His Mother on earth, and even now does in heaven, according to many theologians, then should we not do the same and obey her clearly expressed desires to be honored in our National Shrine, to have a procession and pilgrimages there, and to merit the wonders and miracles she has promised if we do as she has asked? Surely multiple shrines would only serve to divide the devotion and place more emphasis on human interests and the human will in opposition to Our Lady's desires and God's Will in this matter. We have heeded Our Lady's command to hasten to finish her Shrine; now let us hasten to heed her command to have a statue of herself enthroned in *her Shrine* honoring her as Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin, our Patroness, so she can grant all the favors she has promised us and is eager to deliver.



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