



# Hermits of Bethlehem



*Praise be Our Lord Jesus Christ  
with His Most Blessed Mother*

**Dear Friends of Bethlehem:**

*A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun,  
With the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rev 12:1)*

This great sign described by St. John in the Book of Revelation continues to grace our contemporary skies. One of the most well-known apparitions of Our Lady occurred one hundred years ago in the midst of the First World War. On a lovely spring day, the “Angel of Peace” appeared to three young peasant children on a hillside in Fatima, Portugal. Unbeknown to the children, this event was in preparation for the eventual appearance of our Blessed Mother. The angel asked the children to say this prayer:

**My God, I believe, I adore, I hope in You, and I love You.  
I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope,  
And do not love you.** (in the words of Lucia)

The angel assured the children that “the Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of their supplication. So this simple prayer, repeated over and over again, would help the children prepare for one of the most powerful divine interventions in Church history, the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. And it occurred in the midst of World War I— a war that cost humanity 18 million lives.

We invite you to reflect on this short prayer. For are we not in great need of a divine intervention with all the political upheaval, international conflicts in many parts of the world, the ever-present threat of terrorism, the moral decay of our culture, the polarization of ideologies—to name a few? Let us take this simple prayer to heart.

What is the angel asking? (1) that we believe, that we adore, that we trust and that we love GOD! (2) that we ask God’s pardon for those who choose not to believe, adore, trust and love GOD! **BELIEVE**—Faith! We have the Catholic Catechism that tells us what we believe as Catholic Christians, but it’s not just what we believe—not just doctrine. It is how that belief forms our way of life—How do we live our faith? How does our faith form our attitudes, guide our relationships, lead us through the brightest and darkest moments of our life? The saints give us good examples. Let us look at one. St. John of the Cross was imprisoned in a closet by his own religious brothers in the most sordid conditions. Out of that experience, he composed some of the greatest works of mystical theology, works that are read world wide and held up as classics until today. He allowed God to work through his pain and suffering.

But let us remember the second part of the angel’s message. We must pray for those who do not **believe!** That could mean members of our own family, or struggling millennials or hardened atheists, any number of people. 84% of the world population consider themselves “believers” but only 32% are Christian and half of those are Catholic. (Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life). We have a lot of people to pray for, but it might be wise to take a few specific persons at a time. Make them part of your daily prayer program. Give them a hidden Christmas gift, known only to you and the Lord.

## *Hermits of Bethlehem Advent/Christmas Newsletter 2017*

**ADORE**– Worship! The Church calls us to worship every Sunday and Holyday of Obligation by participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Is our worship truly an act of adoration? Have we prepared? So many times we come to worship with many cares and worries crowding our minds, clamoring for attention. Have we disposed ourselves by praying over the Scriptures that will be read at Mass so that we are ready to listen for that still small voice of God’s Holy Spirit speaking to us through the Scripture readings? It is so easy to miss the message.

Our worship continues in our daily life. After all, as baptized Christians we have the Blessed Trinity dwelling within us. We have an interior life that we can tap into in order to adore the Lord, plead for His mercy, ask His healing or forgiveness for oneself or for a friend. And then there is the reserved Eucharistic Presence of Jesus in the tabernacle of our Churches. How He loves to have you visit Him there, to kneel or sit in quiet prayer. By the grace of God, our lives can become a continual act of worship, giving glory to God. Eucharistic Adoration takes this to a higher level, for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament brings with it added graces, a deeper sense of intimacy with the Lord, a more profound awareness of His Presence.

But what about those who do not adore? The angel asks us to ask for pardon for them, to ask that God’s mercy surround them and that the Holy Spirit enlighten them, making them aware of the true condition of their soul and filling them with a spirit of repentance. Remember , **“nothing will be impossible for God.”** (Luke 1:37)

The prayer concludes with the directive to **HOPE** and to **LOVE**— to trust in the loving providence of God that **“all things work for good for those who love God”** (Romans 8:28) and to love one another as Jesus loves us. And this brings us to the heart of what we celebrate during this Advent/Christmas Season for the Babe of Bethlehem brings us all we could ever hope for—eternal happiness— and wraps us in the warmth of His Divine Love. Our Lady of Fatima comes to us this Christmas to continue the work she began 2,000 years ago on that first Christmas night. She brings Emmanuel– God with us– surrounding us with the Divine Love of her Son. She comes with a flood of graces for all her children, especially the ones who do not know her as “Mother”.

During this Advent/Christmas Season let us pray together the prayers of Fatima ( see back cover for more prayers) that our hearts will be prepared for whatever the Lord has planned for us.



*Have a Blessed and Joyous Season!*  
*From your Hermits of Bethlehem*



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### *Words From the Desert*

Thank you once again for opening your life of silent adoration to us, and allowing us to have such a grace-filled time of retreat! May God bless you abundantly for your faithfulness and witness to His Love, which, like fire, transforms everything into itself.

*Sister Francesca Therese*

Thank you so much for the wonderful retreat. All too short but I am grateful to God for it and for all of you.

*Mary*

I am most grateful for this grace-filled week of solitude. I return to our new mission more in love with Our Lord, more in love with my vocation, more grateful for my community and more excited about my new assignment –what more could I ask for! God is so good.! Thank you for your witness of prayerful service.

*Sister Ann Kateri*



The Spirit Life of the Hermits of Bethlehem  
*Living in the Mysteries of Christ  
Imitating the Pattern of His Life*

### **PRAYING WITH OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, visited us one hundred years ago at Fatima to help us deal with two world wars, the one that was raging in 1917 and the one that would come two decades later. At this moment in the history of our world, we find ourselves at another crossroads that could very well lead to war. By the time you read this, the war may have already begun.

The Hermits of Bethlehem are committed to pray for the needs of the Church and the world—that means the whole world, every person, even those who might consider us their enemies. With Mary, we are all called to know **“the glory beyond price...the mystery of Christ in us, our hope of glory...hoping to make every person complete in Christ” (Colossians 1:27-28).** *(Plan of Life, p. 37)*

### **OUR LADY OF FATIMA**

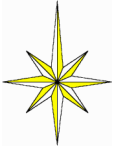
And so each of us is called to be brother and sister to one an-

other, not enemies. We are all sons and daughters of God with Mary, our Mother, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the last of the Fathers of the Church, speaks of Mary as a **“shining and brilliant star...all aglow with examples for our imitation.”** *(Missus Est)* So in the hermits’ call to pray unceasingly for all our brothers and sisters, even for those who persecute us, who do harm to those we love, **“we look at the star, call upon Mary”**. *(Missus Est)*

This is the great mystery of LOVE that Jesus came to reveal to us, and it is this mystery that Our Lady of Fatima comes to renew in our midst. Who, better than Mary to show us how to live present and open to God’s Holy Will, to be filled with peaceful joy, **“My spirit finds joy in God, my Savior” (Luke 1:47)** *(Plan of Life, p.36)*, to discover joy even in sorrow. **“As Mother of the Church, she is given to all so that all may grow into the full maturity of Christ.”** *(Plan of Life, p. 37)*

With the children of Fatima, we need to be attentive to all that Mary is telling us through the events of our lives and through our prayer. No matter how devastating the situation, she guides us on our journey and nurtures us with her maternal wisdom. What a loving Mother we have in Mary!

**Holy Mary, Queen of the Desert, guide us in the journey of the Spirit  
until at last we may sing an eternal Magnificat of love and praise, face to face  
before our all holy, Triune God.** *Bethlehem Prayer*



# 60 Years of Priestly Life



On May 25, 2017, Father Romano celebrated his 60th anniversary of priestly ordination. Hermits and Volunteers came together as a wonderful group of about 200 people who gathered at St. Lawrence Church in Chester for a very festive Liturgy followed by a luncheon at the Publick House also in Chester. What a milestone it was for our dear Abba! Although he remains disabled by that fall he took in Rome 6 years ago, his smiling, loving presence was enjoyed by all.

There were friends and benefactors representing every stage of his priestly life, parish priest, pastor, Founder and Desert Father of the Hermits of Bethlehem in the Heart of Jesus (our dear Abba Emeritus), beloved resident of St. Joseph's Home for the Elderly (Little Sisters of the Poor) in Totowa, NJ.

With a clear, strong voice he renewed his priestly vows and went on to concelebrate the Mass with Father Mariusz Koch, CFR, who was also the homilist, along with the hermit priests and many of his priest friends. With his prepared talk sitting idly on the vest-

ment case in the sacristy, Father Romano spoke his love and gratitude straight from his heart. What a treasure we have in this priest who has withstood so



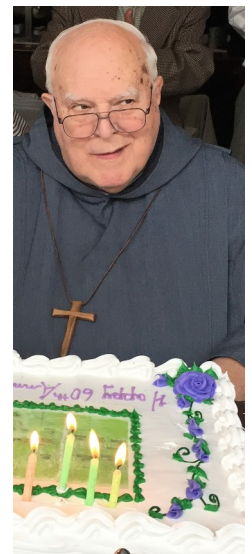
**I am so grateful in my heart  
that you have ... blessed me  
by many words and actions  
of support.**

**I love you, I love you deeply.**

*Father Romano*

many hardships without losing the spirit of joy that comes from the Indwelling Blessed Trinity!

Of course the hermit sisters were there as well, with Sister Mary Margaret, SCC, all supporting their Desert Father Emeritus. Following the Mass we gathered at the Publick House Restaurant for good food and fellowship. It was a joyous day celebrating a joyous event and an ever joyous and dear Father Romano



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## *A Word from the Men's Laura*

*Our Lady of Fatima and the Prince of Peace*

Our mother, the Holy Catholic Church, teaches us that peace is not the absence of conflicts, rather it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It comes from heaven and is bestowed on the world by our Heavenly Father. This is one of the greatest lessons that the revelation of our Lady of Fatima has given us. Our Blessed Mother told the three little shepherds to offer prayers and sacrifices for the conversion of the world and reparation for the sins committed against God. Otherwise, the world would be deprived of the benefits of Jesus' Presence and instead it would be chastised by wars and many trials that sprung up from not having Jesus in our lives.

In the first apparition, Our Blessed Mother spoke as a channel of peace and messenger of the need of conversion. This suggests that she was also the means to bring into the world the Prince of peace and Savior of us all. In the gospel of Saint Luke we read that the Angels appeared to the shepherds singing: *'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favors'*. After adoring the Child Jesus, they *"went back glorifying and praising God"*. Thus, glorifying God predisposes the soul and the world to receive the peace that we all desire. And the Blessed Mother want us to have it.

In the second apparition, our Lady of Fatima spoke of the need to consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart so that Russia would be converted. This act of faith, which needed to be done by the Pope in union with the bishops around the world, reminds us of the presentation of the Lord Jesus in the temple. There the faithful Simeon 'took Him (the child Jesus) into his arms and Blessed God as the priest elevates the body of Christ in the Holy Mass and the prophetess Anna adores Him as the contemplative souls adoring and loving the Most Blessed Sacrament. Simeon then *"...blessed them and said to Mary His mother, 'Look, He is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be sign that is opposed - and a sword will pierce your soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare'"*. It is through the suffering of our Blessed Mother that we get to know hidden and important things related to our pilgrimage on earth towards the House of our Heavenly Father. It is very meaningful that Our Lady of Fatima revealed to the shepherds and the whole world of the dangers ahead –the consequence of our opposition to the commands and teachings of the eternal Word.

In the third apparition, Our Blessed Mother showed the shepherds an apocalyptic view of the world. It was and still is not easy to understand the depth of the vision and its consequences. However, it highlights the need of conversion, to walk in a different path like the three Magi who in seeking the King of Jews, found Him in a manger and after adoring Him and acknowledging His divine authority, *"returned to their own country by a different way"*. Thus it may be interpreted that the Magi were converted, and avoided interaction with the political establishment since their hearts were full of trust and confidence in the love and power of the silent prince of peace. Like the Magi, we and the whole world need to have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. Once this happens, sinners will become new persons in the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ, new nations will arise, and new cultures will be born. Similarly, we are united to Christ in a mysterious way when we receive Holy Communion and are transformed into the likeness of the Lord by having a profound encounter with Him that will bring us closer to Him.

The apparition of our Lady of Fatima reveals that God has not lost "His hope" in the conversion of the world. That there is time, although short, during which prayers, penance, and offering of oneself in union with Christ are essential factors in the preservation of peace and the salvation of souls. Is it not wonderful that God communicates to us that we, although insignificant, are important players in the divine plan of salvation? May our hearts be filled with eagerness to do His Holy Will and thus glorify His most Holy Name.

*Infant Jesus! Precious and Perfect Hostia!  
Corporal gift to my soul,  
With what sacrificial love You abandon yourself,  
And I, shamed, on my knees  
in tears for my countless sins  
of denials and rejections,  
Have only lamentations to offer.  
And You, sweetly, with your gentle hands, gather my  
tears  
And drink of them  
Calming the blazing flames  
Replacing them with the Your rays of light,  
Transforming the night  
in me, and, as if my chest were to offer solace, there  
You slumber, and I  
Contemplating in silence, waiting, expecting  
My Hostia, My King!  
You awake  
And with a single beat and breath,  
You unite your heart with mine,  
We are One.*

*By a hermit sister*



*A Most Blessed  
Advent | Christmas  
Season*

**MAY THE DIVINE BABE OF BETHLEHEM POUR OUT AN IMMENSE FLOOD OF GRACES UPON ALL OF YOU. WE ARE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE GOODNESS YOU HAVE DONE FOR US. WITHOUT YOU WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUE OUR MINISTRY OF PRAYER AND PENANCE FOR YOU AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE.**

*With Love and prayers,*

*Your Hermits of Bethlehem*



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If you would like to have a five-day candle lit for you before the Blessed Sacrament or before the icon of Jesus or the icon of Mary, or to honor the Word of God at the lectern, please fill out this order form, clip it out and return it to Bethlehem along with a \$2.00 offering for each candle.

Yes, I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_ would like to have \_\_\_\_\_ candles lit at Bethlehem for the following intentions:

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I am enclosing an offering of \_\_\_\_\_ for the candles. Thank you and God bless you!



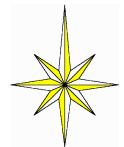
## *Advent and Christmas Novena*

*With deep gratitude for all your love and kindness, we will offer a Novena of Masses for your intentions during the Holy Seasons of Advent and Christmas. We invite you to join us in our Advent/Christmas Novena by praying the Advent Prayer from December 16th to Christmas Eve. Pray the Christmas Novena Prayer on Christmas Day and the following eight days.*

### *Advent Prayer*

*Hail and blessed be the hour and the moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary at midnight in Bethlehem, in piercing cold.*

*In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God to hear my prayer and grant my desires through the merits of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.*



### *Christmas Prayer*

*Almighty God, let the gracious spirit of the Little Child, as He knocks at the hearts of us all, enter my life. Let duty become touched with beauty, and justice be tempered with love. Let my obligations be changed to opportunities.*

*Let my ears hear the cry of the needy and my heart feel love for the unlovely. Give me strength, not to do great things, but small things graciously.*

*Heal the wounds of misunderstanding, jealousy or regret that scar my heart and let the gentle air of the warming Christmas spirit touch my life.*

*Grant us peace in the world and peace in my own heart that those I love and those whom I help may have sweet joy and loving trust. Amen*

## Four More Prayers from Fatima

On one occasion, the three children saw the angel prostrate before a host and chalice that hung in mid air. Worshipping the Eucharist the angel prayed,

**Most Holy Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Spirit-I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference whereby He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners.**

### THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

During the first apparition of Our Lady the children found themselves "moved by an interior impulse," as Lucia later explained to say the following prayer together:

**Most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee! My God, my God, I love Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament.**

### THE SACRIFICE PRAYER

The Blessed Virgin taught the children to offer all their personal sacrifices to God by praying,

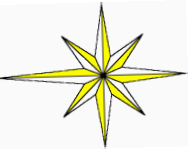
**O my Jesus, I offer this for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

### THE ROSARY DECADE PRAYER

The Blessed stressed the critical importance of praying the Rosary daily for the conversion of sinners and for peace in the world. She asked that the following prayer be recited at the end of each rosary decade:

**Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.**

*Commentary by Mary Thierfelder*



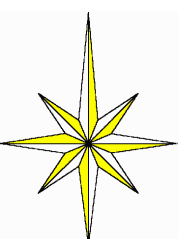
*Hermits of Bethlehem in the Heart of Jesus*

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