

Letter
from the Dominican Nuns
of the Monastery of the Immaculata

no. 4

O Lord, graciously watch over this house both night and day, and also dedicate this church in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was built to house the sacred mysteries. O merciful God, in Thy clemency consecrate it, in Thy mercy enlighten it, in Thy splendor glorify it. Willingly protect all those who come here to implore Thee and graciously hear them: so that always glad and always rejoicing in Thy worship, they may persevere until the end in the Catholic Faith, and in the constant profession of the Holy Trinity.

Ceremonial of the consecration of a church



Dear Friends,

Gaudens gaudebo in Domino... On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Church leads us into the interior sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, into her song of adoration and thanksgiving to God. Chosen from all eternity to be His Mother, she is also the temple most pure, the holy temple, a consecrated temple to receive the Incarnate Word, her Savior. *Domum tuam Domini, decet sanctitudo - Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord...* (Psalm 92). It is the same Divine Word Who came down to the womb of the Our Lady, Who makes Himself present in our churches and dwells there. How could He not desire to render them also perfectly pure and immaculate? He entrusted to His Church this power to sanctify, the power to consecrate a temple made by human hands for His worship; this is the splendid and eloquent ceremony of the consecration of a church.

Providence granted us the immense blessing to experience this ceremony on September 17, 2022, the day chosen by God from all eternity to consecrate our church and make it His home. Through the sublime liturgy, the Church displays all of Her riches, all of Her magnificence to help our souls grasp this mystery of God. It is God's joy to bend down towards us, to live amongst us, to look with pity upon us, to answer our prayers, to purify us of our wretchedness, to heal us. It is the glory of the Triune God to sanctify, by His presence, not only our stone churches, but even more so the temples of our souls.

We were struck by the beauty of this consecration, and since our church is also *your* church (by your charity literally enshrined in its walls), we would like to let you experience the ceremony through a few of its most beautiful prayers.



On the eve of the ceremony, Bishop de Galarreta, assisted by two deacons and surrounded by several priests and seminarians, prepared and blessed the “Gregorian Water,” a mixture of wine, water, ashes, and salt – representative of Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, His death and resurrection. This water is used to purify the exterior and interior of the church.

The bishop also prepared the small metal coffer for the relics which will be laid in the “sepulchre” of the altar. The relics of the martyrs Saint Peter of Verona, Saint Tarcisius, and Saint Perpetua are joined by those of the Patriarch of the Order of Preachers, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Catherine de Ricci.

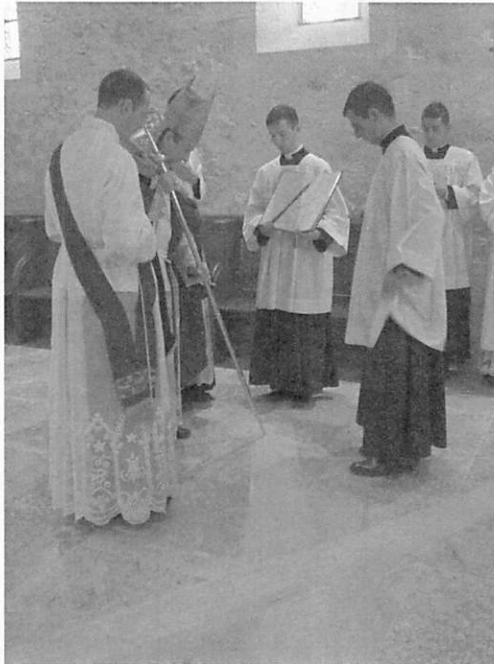


The sealed coffer was then placed in a grand reliquary in the chapter room. Late in the evening, the community was blessed to be able to keep vigil there before the altar erected in honor of these saints, chanting the Matins of Martyrs.

The next morning, the consecration ceremony began in the presence of the holy relics. *Adesto, Deus unus omnipotens, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus - Assist us, O God, One and Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* The prelate thus invoked our thrice-holy God and placed himself in His hands before beginning this holy act.

Preceded by the cross-bearer, the clergy, and surrounded by his ministers, His Excellency walked along the outside of the church to perform the aspersion of its walls. After returning to the main door of the church, a majestic dialogue prepared the entry of the prelate, followed by the procession – a representation of Our Lord going before us to the Heavenly Jerusalem. The inside of the church is still completely bare and empty but it seemed to be filling up with the invisible presence of the inhabitants of Heaven as the clergy, the nuns, and the faithful chanted the litany of the saints. The aspersion of the inside walls and the lustration of the altar followed next.

Sand was laid down on the floor of the nave in the form of a cross, on which the Bishop traced with his crosier the Greek and Latin alphabets. This is symbolic of the peoples of all languages and all nations that Jesus Christ gathered together by His Sacrifice into One Holy Church consecrated to God.



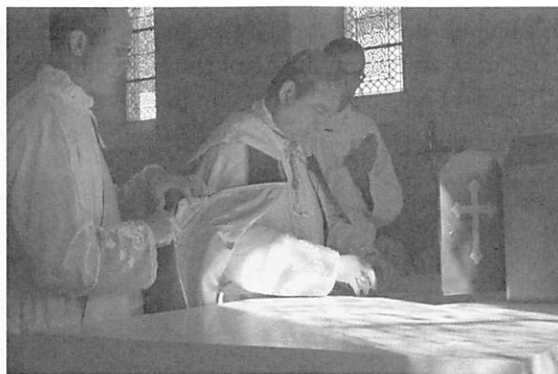
Vere non est hic aliud, nisi Dei et porta caeli.
Truly, this place is nothing other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven

Next, His Excellency and all the clergy made their way to the chapter room in procession to retrieve the holy relics. *“Arise, ye Saints of God, depart from your abodes; hasten to the places prepared for you...”*

The solemn cortège then proceeded back to the church.



“Enter in, ye Saints of God, for here God has prepared a dwelling place for you. Indeed, faithful people joyfully follow your course, so that you may pray for us before the majesty of the Lord...” sang the choir with joy while the prelate prepared to lay the precious coffer in the selpuchre of the altar – the very spot where the sacrifice of Our Savior will be renewed each day.



O ye Saints of God, you have received a dwelling place beneath the altar of God: intercede for us with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

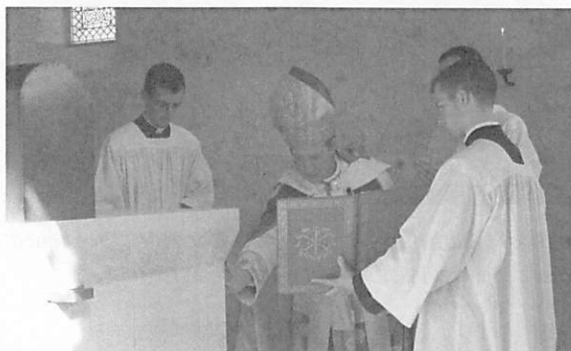
Then came the moment of the actual consecration of the church, properly speaking: The twelve mural crosses, sculpted with such precision by our masons, were finally anointed with Holy Chrism.



May this temple be sanctified and consecrated in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to the honor of God and in memory of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

By this consecration, with an ineffaceable character, the church is exclusively dedicated to Divine worship. Above each cross, a candle was lit, representing the preaching of the twelve Apostles, the columns of the Church.

Then the Bishop applied the Holy Chrism to the five crosses engraved in the altar stone – an image of the five holy wounds of Our Lord – while Psalm 44 was being sung, which evokes the holy unction with which God anointed Christ, eternal and sovereign priest.



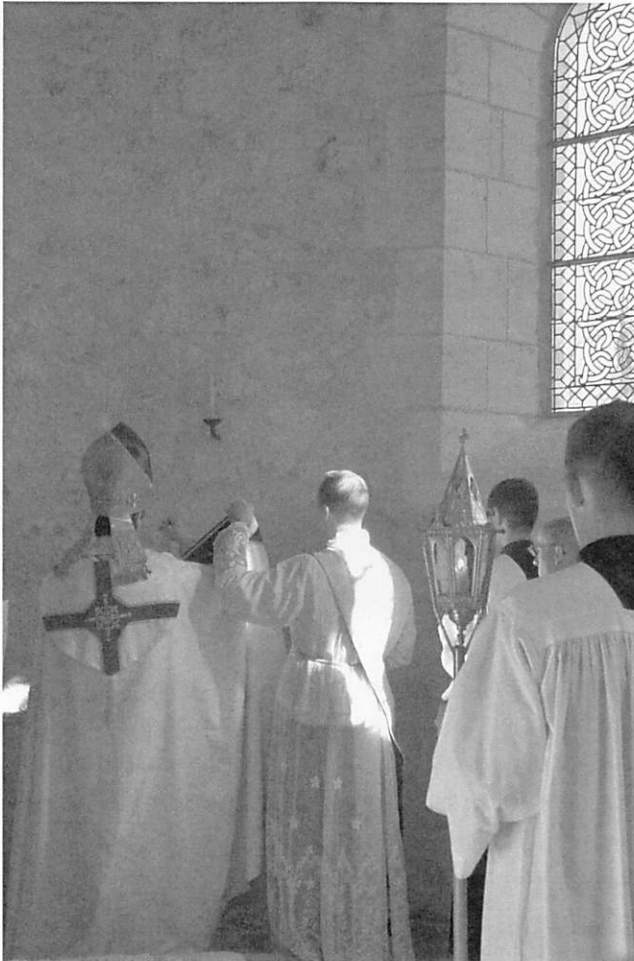
On the now consecrated altar, the prelate then placed and lit five small crosses made of wax and incense. While the flames and the incense rose from the altar, all knelt to sing the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. The Bishop's prayer also rose, asking the Most High to deign to accept and sanctify the sacrifices that will be offered on this altar.



The magnificent consecratory preface, consecrating our church and altar in honor of the Immaculata, resonates in God's new temple:

Moved by these prayers, O Lord, pour forth upon this altar Thy blessing and Heavenly sanctification. May angels of light surround it, and may the splendor of the Holy Ghost shine upon it. May it find grace before Thee, as that altar which Abraham, the father of the faith, built to immolate his son, thus prefiguring our redemption; as that which Isaac built in the sight of Thy Majesty; as that which Jacob erected, seeing the Lord in a great vision...

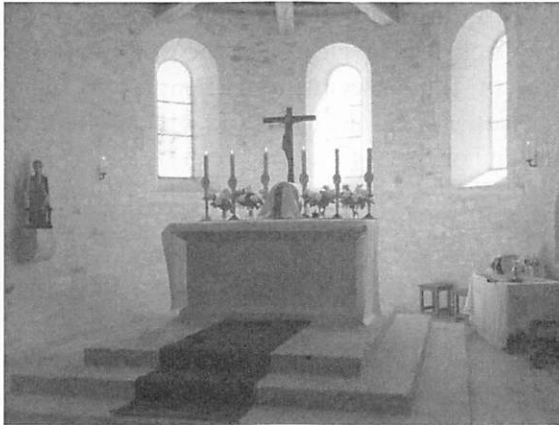
This occasion of the consecration of our church will remain in our hearts and minds as the final crowning of the work begun by Mother Marie-Emmanuel, *for the glory of God and the Immaculata*. She ardently desired that this foundation be a *garden of holiness, purity, and joy for God. A little lighthouse of consolation for the Immaculata, and especially a step towards the triumph of her Heart...* We are striving with the grace of God to respond to this desire of our Mother by becoming more and more Mary-like.



Dear Friends, if we are still here, it is thanks to you and your generosity. Our monastery, our life consecrated to God alone, cannot subsist without your continual support. You can imagine how much we are indebted to you, and how grateful we are. Our “thank you” is transformed into prayer for you and your intentions everyday in this new “Bethlehem” of our consecrated church.

On Christmas night, may the Incarnate Word deign to make His quiet entrance into the temples of all of our souls to enlighten them with the sweet yet powerful light of His truth, His love, and His peace.

Mother Prioress



Day by Day

On the evening of January 17, we honored the “Madonna of the Stars” with a little Marian vigil in imitation of that which the villagers of Pontmain, France had at the feet of Our Lady in 1871. The world and the Church have such need of prayer, and Our Heavenly Mother is able to touch the Heart of her Son for us.

During Lent, a series of conferences allowed us to discover music history and introduced us to the modes of Gregorian chant. In the beginning, music was first oriented towards God and the harmony of creation, but over the centuries, it began to appeal more and more

to sensibility and the passions. The invention of polyphony certainly paved the way for many works of great beauty; nonetheless, according to the teaching of the popes, Gregorian chant remains the model *par excellence* of sacred music. In its austere simplicity, it is an eminent spiritual art with a large richness of expression.

His Excellency Bishop Alfonso de Galarreta honored us by his presence on March 11 and announced some good news: He would be returning in a few months for the consecration of our church on September 17. This was a great joy for us, but we also anticipated a good amount of work; six months would not be too much time for the preparation of this splendid yet long ceremony!

The ceremony is first prepared spiritually in our souls, for each detail of the liturgy is full of rich symbolism. The consecration of a temple of stone dedicated to the worship of the Most Holy Trinity represents the consecration of a temple with *living stones*, built upon the *Foundation Stone* of Christ, and which will be offered to the Father at the end of time.



Anointing the altar joints

But there is also the material preparation – and we had our work cut out for us! The sacristy work, choir practice, organization, problems to resolve... The truth is, we would never have been able to accomplish this alone. Fortunately, help came to us from all over: Between our sisters at St Joseph's Monastery, our Dominican Fathers,

the Benedictine nuns of Notre-Dame de Toute Confiance, the Priory at Bergerac, the Carmel at Eynesse, devoted friends...it was a magnificent and Providential “race” of charity, and we thank everyone with much gratitude!



Preparation of the sand cross on which is inscribed the two alphabets

The weeks and months passed by quickly...and finally the morning of September 17 dawned – a clear sky and the pleasant warmth of the end of summer. Providence sent us the ideal weather. Numerous priests and religious honored us with their presence; many also, unable to come, sent us touching marks of their friendship and prayers. Father de Lacoste (the rector of the seminary at Ecône) sent us ten of his seminarians to serve during the ceremony. They did a marvelous job, and we admired the beauty and poise of each liturgical gesture. Behind that recollected confidence and ease, there are hours of practice for the greater glory of God.

Bishop de Galarreta’s sermon during the Pontifical Mass invited us to union with God. By grace, our souls (even more so than stone churches), are temples of God, a “Heaven” wherein He dwells. He waits there to receive the homage of our loving attention and the efforts of our charity in order to make this temple ever more worthy of Him.

In the heart of the Immaculate Virgin, God received this love and adoration to the fullest; it is thus at her “school” that we should put ourselves under her guidance:

Behold the work, dear sisters, that you should perform, concluded the prelate, precisely here in this church, a place of prayer where you are going to worship God. A place of sacrifice, where you are going to offer yourselves in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ. (...) “Beati qui habitant in domo tua - Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house, O Lord.” (...) Blessed is he who dwells in the temple of the heart and soul of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary; that is the secret of Marian devotion and holiness, particularly in our times. But blessed is he also who dwells in his own temple, for alas, life always leads us to live on the surface, for outward appearances, for tangible things, for the senses, for everything that happens arounds us. Blessed is he who learns how to retire within himself, to search for God, to recollect himself, to unite himself with God in his heart.



Chanting Matins of Martyrs before the relic altar in the chapter room

A few days after this memorable event, our annual retreat permitted us to enter our “interior temple.” Through the conferences, the retreat master led us through each of the fourteen stations of The Way of the Cross as different stages in the spiritual life. With our eyes fixed on Our Lord, we must walk with steps of love, carry our cross (our “old man”) and accept abnegation, which makes us free to receive, on the poor,

barren surface of our souls, the Face of the Word of God...until death, the door of total union, in eternal glory.

At the end of these ten days of silence, Sister Agatha made her perpetual vows on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. If the consecration of a church is a great blessing, how much more is that of the consecration of a soul exclusively to Our Lord? Such is the gift of Baptism and that of our religious vows...

After the Solemn Mass, surrounded by her family and friends, our sister had the joy to see her own little sister who just received the Dominican habit this summer at Fanjeaux with the teaching Dominicans of the Holy Name of Jesus!

At the end of the month of the Holy Rosary, a fascinating theology session had us study the treatise on faith in the Summa Theologica by St Thomas Aquinas. This luminous doctrine draws us to adoration and thanksgiving. In the domain of the theological virtues, everything is a free gift, an extraordinary gift from God, revealing Himself, offering Himself to men in order to become his supernatural End.



Our Work and Our Needs

If all of the big construction work is behind us now, the chapter of “finishing touches” has not yet come to a close. In particular, we would like to be able to finish the rectory where we welcome priests who come to visit, and also to furnish our grand parlor with tables for the theology and spirituality courses offered to us regularly there.

You can imagine that the maintenance of our large monastery is a burden... Like you, we are trying to be frugal. Equipped with excellent installations by Divine Providence, and by your generosity, we are doing our best to come out ahead: Wood burning stoves, precious for heating, are now also being used for cooking; the antique bread oven will soon be back in service... Despite all of that, bills keep coming!

With what gratitude we thank you for having supported us day after day, in spite of the material difficulties that you must often meet with yourselves! It is the constant miracle of Providence towards the poor; and your charity, which is God’s work, will not go unpaid. *Noli timere, ego protector tuus sum et merces tua magna nimis - Fear not, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceedingly great. (Genesis 15: 1)*



How to help us

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La Grange - 583 route de la Grange
F-24140 Montagnac-la-Crempse - France

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Traditional Cloistered Dominican Nuns

You can either send the check to the monastery,
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3594 North Cederblom Street - Apt 215
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Wire transfers, to the order of Monastère de l'Immaculée

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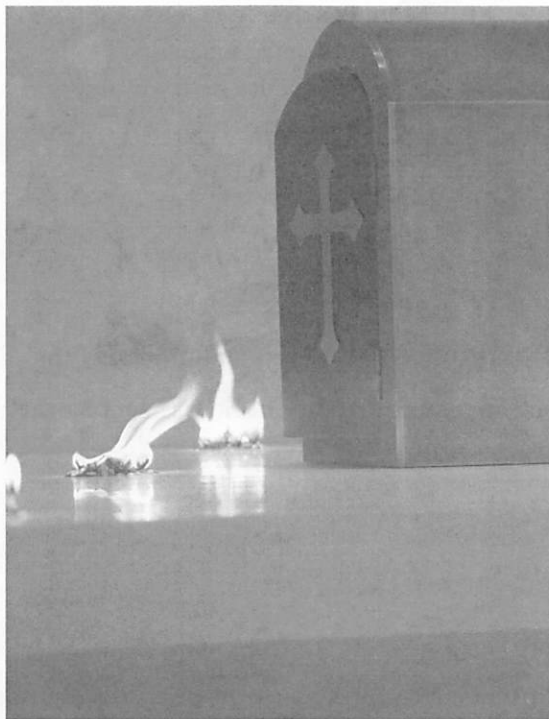
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Donations are tax-deductible in France and in the United States.

Most especially the Dominican nuns thank those of you
who consider making them beneficiaries of a will or of a life insurance:
to the order of Monastère de l'Immaculée.

Contact us for more information.

This remains the surest way to assure our daily needs
and the permanence of our life consecrated exclusively to prayer.



Wax cross burning before the tabernacle

It is fitting indeed and just, right and helpful to salvation, for us always and everywhere to give thanks to Thee, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God, Who, giver of all good things, dwells in this house of prayer that we have built, and sanctifies the Church Thou hast founded by Thy unceasing action. For, She is indeed, in all truth, the House of prayer, figured by our visible edifices, the Temple where Thy glory resides, the Seat of unchanging truth, the Sanctuary of eternal charity. She combats faithfully on earth, assisted by her Spouse, and crowned by Him, triumphs forever in Heaven.

Proper Preface of the Dedication of a church