



Photo Courtesy of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School

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Come, Holy Spirit!

I have often wondered why so many people say, "Come, Holy Spirit", at the beginning of spontaneous, verbal prayer. It has crossed my mind to alter such a prayer to be one of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit for His Presence, since the Holy Spirit is always already here.

However, over time, by grace, and through guides such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, I have been made more aware that this simple, three-worded-prayer is powerful, effective, and purposeful.

Come, Holy Spirit!

"I have come to set the world on fire."

Luke 12:49

St. Bernard of Clairvaux writes in one of His Advent sermons about three "comings" of the Lord: the first, in Jesus' Incarnation and earthly life; the second, in spirit and power; and the third, in glory and majesty at the end of time. Yes, the Lord has already appeared on earth in the flesh. Yes, He will appear again in His glorified Body in such a manner that all will know Who He is and who they are in His sight. And, in the "in between time", He has sent us His Spirit as our advocate, consoler, and friend. St. Bernard posits that in this middle, spiritual coming, we are meant to find rest and consolation in the gift of the Father and the Son: the Holy Spirit. But, do we ask for this rest? Do we ask so as to be open to the Consoler Who is always with us?

The Holy Spirit dwells in us, delights in us, and washes away sin in us through Baptism. The gift of the Spirit, we could say, is ours through Baptism. And we know that God is truly present in His Church (i.e., in the totality of what it means to be His Body) in a plethora of ways. Why ask for Him to come again, then? Well, who can say that he or she knows perfectly how to pray as he or she ought (cf. Romans 8:26), and does not need the Holy Spirit for guidance? And, who doesn't need to be refreshed by the grace that comes through acknowledging his or her need for God and dependence upon Him? Do we not all need an occasional reminder that He is truly with us? Refreshment in Love can come in a moment. "Come, Holy Spirit" is a quick way to recall that we are made for accompaniment. We are in fact being accompanied by Someone Who wants to accompany us and reveal the fullness of Love to us, and the One Who accompanies us desires our welcome to be able to help us as we need.

**-Reflection in preparation for Pentecost
by Sr. April Marie Josefina Candelaria, HMSS**

“Refreshment in Love
can come in a moment.
"Come, Holy Spirit"
is a quick way to recall
that we are made for
accompaniment...”



The Pentecost Painting by Otto van Veen

SEEK TO THE HEIGHTS *Recap*



For five days, January 1-5, 2026, more than 26,000 college students, young adults, some not-so-young-anymore adults, religious, priests, and seminarians gathered in three U.S. cities to encounter the love and truth of God and His Church.



SEEK26 marks the 10th FOCUS conference for me. I had the blessing of going three times as a student, six times as a FOCUS missionary, and this was my first as a Mercedarian Sister of the Blessed Sacrament. The highlights of FOCUS conferences have shifted for me throughout the years.

As a student, staying up late talking with friends and going to Adoration were always great experiences. As a missionary, seeing students encounter Jesus and the beauty of His Church, and making sure we did not leave anyone behind was the goal. As a religious, while all of these things were still true, the scope of encountering others expanded greatly. Some key moments for me were encountering old friends, former missionary teammates, and former students.

One of the most unexpected graces was meeting many former students and former missionaries. God overwhelmed me with His amazing show of faithfulness. This was particularly displayed in the lives of two of my former students. One, I was leading in a Bible study during my undergraduate years who is now a religious sister in Indiana, and another former student when I was a first year missionary who was living a lukewarm faith at best and is now is a priest of Jesus Christ. He carried Jesus in the Eucharistic procession during the Saturday night Adoration amidst thousands of hungry souls. Both of these beautiful people had powerful moments of encounter with our Lord at FOCUS SEEK conferences (and I may have highly encouraged both to attend). This encounter changed their lives. Now how many lives are changed by their witness and example of Christ's love to the world!!!

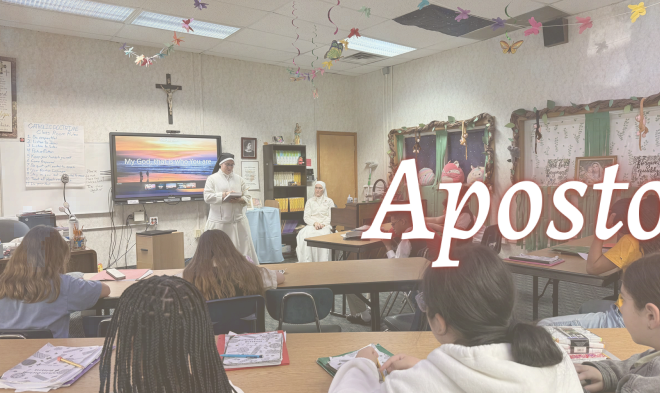
I know as a Mercedarian Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, the Lord's powerful redemption is so key to how God has invited us to share His love in the world. Yet, seeing how others' lives have continually been purified and sanctified in His redeeming love, over the course of more than a decade, is dumbfounding. Jesus did not just call and encounter and change them once, but His call is ongoing. The relationship is ongoing. What a gift to have been able to be around thousands of people, mainly college students, hungering for more than this world can offer. For five days, we focused on the Lord and the deep truths of who we are, Whose we are, and that for which we are made. For many faces in the crowd, we were just a group of joyful sisters. For some, we were the connection for further steps in discernment to be taken. For our own students at the University of Florida, SEEK has served as a springboard for ongoing opportunities for conversation, prayer, and conversion.

As a religious sister, this was a completely new angle for me. We had the grace of having a booth in Mission Way, which meant we had the opportunity to meet those searching for ways to grow in their faith, answer questions for discerners, meet and pray with other religious communities, and show SEEK goes the beautiful charism entrusted to us.

-Sr. Megan Maria Luz Henle, HMSS, serves in Campus Ministry at the University of Florida

Four of our sisters attended SEEK26 in Dallas/Fort Worth and another four in Columbus. Some highlights included leading praise & worship during children's Adoration, joining the mainstage for a game, being on a vocation panel, and singing praise and worship at our booth in Mission Way.





Apostolic Experiences

What is the Apostolic Experience?

A sister's time in the novitiate lasts for two years. The first year is considered "cloistered," and it is during this time that the novice continues to build her relationship with God, with the Institute, and with her sisters. During a novice's second year, she is invited to participate more actively in the apostolate of our Institute. For the first time in our Region, we second year novices were given the opportunity to spend an entire month visiting different communities. The purpose of this experience is to help us novices further discern our calling to religious life as Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, as we live and serve alongside our professed sisters. Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Kristin, and I were on a 2-week rotation, during which we were able to visit two of our professed communities throughout Ohio and Baton Rouge. Please keep Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Kristin, and me in your prayers as we continue to discern the Lord's will in our lives and approach First Profession of Vows in July! -Sr. Olivia

Overall, how was your apostolic experience? Any "glory stories" or significant moments that really struck you?

I especially learned how Jesus wants to love through every small detail if you are attentive to it. I experienced this when it was a student's birthday at St. Michael the Archangel High School. We went on a mission to bring her a coloring sheet (the activity for that day of "Funsies with the Nunsies" during the lunch periods) to make it extra special. However, I could not find a truly black marker to write her name within the heart of St. Joseph outline on the sheet. Marker after marker, they were stubbornly blue! I finally gave up and gave her the sheet with her name in blue... to find out that blue was her favorite color! Jesus' way to "love on her" in an unexpected way. - Sr. Elizabeth

In what ways did this experience strengthen your understanding of our Eucharistic-Mercedarian charism?

We "shadowed" each sister for a day in such a variety of apostolic roles and environments: PreK through 8th grade, a front desk presence at the school, and high school or college campus ministry. As well as a range of the explicitly "Jesus time" of Catholic Doctrine, guiding Adoration, prayer, and small groups, to the "ordinary time" of teaching other subjects, being present at lunch or recess, or encouraging and supporting faculty. Because of this, I could reflect on what I witnessed as a common thread. In whatever role or environment, I witnessed our professed sisters' willingness to become Eucharist for others through meeting the need for love in the present moment. I could understand more that it was not about excelling at what they were physically doing or teaching, but about their disposition: coming to the students and teachers with a readiness to give everything they could for them, to let all of the "bread" they had (their gifts, talents, time, energy, reflections from their life of prayer, and even their weaknesses and places of vulnerability) be taken into Jesus' hands so that it could be blessed, broken, and shared. In regards to the Mercedarian charism, it was inspiring to see the level of sacrifice hidden behind apostolic life, driven from a desire to lay down one's life for the greater freedom of others. I saw how our sisters quietly accepted and took joy in the daily sacrifices of rising very early, having simpler or quick meals, giving student after student their full attention, giving time to fraternity with other sisters and time for apostolic events in the evenings even when exhausted from a day at school, etc. These sacrifices are their opportunity to participate in Jesus' sacrifice more deeply and their "labor pains" for their spiritual children. - Sr. Elizabeth

LEM Promises

“To you Holy Trinity, I desire to unite myself more deeply through promises as a lay person”

On February 7, 2026, seven of our Mercedarian Laity of the Blessed Sacrament members (LEM in Spanish) became the first to profess private promises to God within our Institute after 2.5 years of formation! Because classes are online, coming together from across the country to attend an in-person retreat, where they could be strengthened in fellowship, was a beautiful way to lead up to their Promises Mass. A great blessing was that Fr. Edward Hopkins, a Legionary of Christ, guided their final spiritual preparation that weekend; speaking on the uniqueness of their lay vocation in the Church.

Our promised members are now fully received into the Mercedarian-Eucharistic Lay Movement for life! They promised to live according to our charism and spirituality as an extension of their baptismal consecration, and they became recipients of the graces and indulgences granted to our religious family. They received a Mercedarian pin, as well as our Prayer Book (the daily prayers, songs, and novenas of our community).



After the Promises Mass at Our Lady of Hope Retreat Center in Chatawa, MS!
Promised LEM: **Katherine Vehige** (Conway, SC), **Kathy and Dave Wither** (Seattle, WA),
Mary Lynne Huber, Diane Purcell, Kim Johnson, Reine Babin (Baton Rouge, LA)

“As time passed, I saw them taking very seriously their vocation as laity and the responsibilities they have in the Church as disciples of Christ. They grew in their awareness of what it means to give their lives to the Church as lay people. Now **they can go to places and approach people that sometimes priests and religious are not able to**, for ex. places of recreation, restaurants, or bars. They can be walking examples of disciples of Christ. I also witnessed the strengthening of their marriages and how they are trying to live as icons of the relationship of Christ with the Church. They are beautifully desiring continuous formation so we plan to continue having online meetings to discuss documents of the Church as well as how to view the world’s current events and culture through the lens of Christ.”

-Mother Jeanette Marie, HMSS, one of our LEM formators

“I promise Obedience to God as manifested by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.”

“I promise filial love to our Blessed Mother Mary – under the title of Our Lady of Ransom.”



“I promise to honor, love and spread the love of the Blessed Sacrament, while striving to allow Christ to transform me into Eucharist for others.”

“Being part of LEM has truly been a gift, allowing me to participate more deeply in the prayers and spirituality of the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. I felt genuinely welcomed into the family by the sisters and a sense of purpose from God on the day we made our Promises. In living out these Promises, I have found myself more intentional about bringing people to Jesus through my prayers in Adoration, and in receiving Him, bringing His redemptive love to the community in which He has placed me. LEM has also brought me closer to our Blessed Mother and to Mother Foundress, Maria del Refugio. I frequently ask for her intercession in my life, seeking her guidance as I live out the charism she began.”

- Katie Vehige, Newly Promised LEM Member

Veni Creator Spiritus

Come, Creator Spirit!

Sr. Yvelyne Marie Bernard, HMSS, shares her experience refurbishing the Paschal Lamb statue in Baton Rouge, which symbolizes Christ, the Lamb that was slain (Revelation 5:6-7):



(After)



(Before)



This Easter Season, the creative fruits of our prayer reflected the glory of Christ's Resurrection! Read a beautiful reflection on our blog with photos of all of our chapels: www.mercedariansisters.org/the-beauty-of-easter/

The Friday before Palm Sunday, Mother Jeanette came to me expressing desire for the Lamb to be refurbished because the paint was chipped and dull. Moreover, she wanted the base to look like the Book of Revelation. There is backstory to why we even have this Lamb of God in the first place. Our beloved Kim Johnson (LEM Member) had seen it and felt in her spirit that she needed to buy it but had no use for it at the time. Ten years would pass until she finally saw its purpose being fulfilled as a centerpiece to decorate the sanctuary during the Easter season. I went with Sr. Trinity to Home Depot to buy paint and sanding materials and then to Hobby Lobby for ribbons and melting wax. Our experience with the lady at the Paint section was lovely. She was very helpful and even gave us a discount! I knew that if this project was going to be finished by Easter Sunday I would have to implore help. I thank God for Mr. Terri who stripped the base of its original coat of paint and sanded it down. I began to work on the Lamb's body placing lots of pure white paint all over His fur. I would mix black in to make gray for shadows and also just to make the fur look realistic. I like to think that the dark spots on His fur, witness to the fact that the work of redemption is messy business. He took on the sin of the world and swallowed it up completely and yet on His glorified body remains the wounds of His crucifixion. Soon, I started to see his body take shape and I got so excited saying "Ooo Jesus, you look good!" I repainted the base red and outlined it with gold. On one side I wrote the title of the book in gothic calligraphy. Sr. Ana Gabriella and Alana helped make the lines of the book and Sr. Ana Gabriella also helped sand down the halo and repaint it gold. I finished the halo by adding the red and the Greek letters OWN which is an abbreviation meaning I Am Who Am. Finally, I melted down gold wax and used our Mercedarian shield as the seal to make the seven seals. I glued the seals to ribbons and then glued the ribbons to one side of the base that look like page lines. But the finishing touches of having red and blue fabric, representing blood and water, is the genius of our Postulant Maria. It is so wonderful that this project could be a group effort.

Parent Insights

We encounter many parents and families of young women discerning who are desiring insight, advice, and community. Though we cannot tend to all these areas, we desire to share some reflections from the parents of our sisters who have experienced, first-hand, what it means for their daughter to follow God's call to be a Bride of Christ. We pray this new section of our Newsletter, and the additional resources we will soon include on our website, will be helpful to many families. For parents desiring more resources, we also recommend visiting: www.parentsofvocations.com

"We both remember realizing very gradually that our daughter, Sr. Grace of Mary, had a vocation to religious life. She has always been focused and intentional about everything important to her, including practicing her Catholic faith. One of many examples was when she asked her father to accompany her to all of the Easter Triduum services. This is still a special memory. We watched her calling to practice her faith within her university community (Catholic Gators at UF) grow to a deep desire to be part of the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament community. We saw her fit a "Come And See" with the sisters into a holiday weekend and then ask to spend her Spring Break with them in Cleveland. Her discernment timeline before entrance to the Novitiate was about 3 years. Sr. Grace of Mary initially told us that she planned to commit to religious life while still in graduate school for her Doctorate in Physical Therapy. She has always been an outstanding student and this was no exception. From the Formation leadership, and her parents, she was encouraged to complete her education to help her know and understand her choices and confirm her discernment. Our own "yes" as her parents was also a process. We wanted to give all of our children opportunity and support to find their own path in life. This is challenging and involves a trust and a type of letting go. The life of a religious sister is not what we would have predicted for our daughter, but it has revealed many blessings that surprise us and show us that she is exactly where she is supposed to be."

- Mr. & Mrs. Kupiszewski

Pictured Below: Sr Grace of Mary, HMSS with her parents on their drive to Cleveland, OH for her entrance.



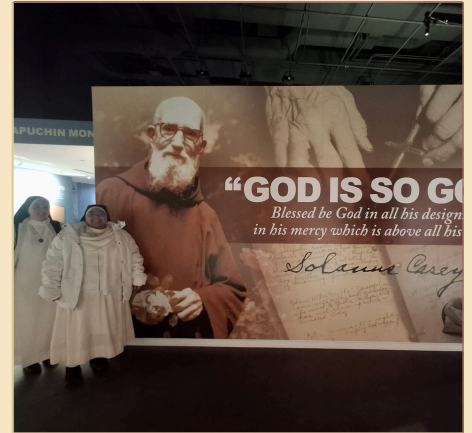
Moments from the Semester



Expansion of the Our Lady of Mercy Convent (Baton Rouge, LA) continues.



Families of the postulants and novices visit the St. Michael the Archangel Formation House.



Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Joseph communities visit the Bl. Solanus Casey Center.



Spring 2026 Baton Rouge, LA Discernment Retreat



Singing at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception with the Dominicans of St. Cecilia during the March for Life Pilgrimage.



Spring 2026 Cleveland, OH, Discernment Retreat



Encounter School of Ministry Baton Rouge Satellite Campus holds first Prophetic and Healing Ministry Practicum.



Mother Isabel Rodriguez, HMSS, Regional Superior, visits the communities in Maumee, Cleveland, and Gainesville.



LEM Entrance to Postulancy (Baton Rouge, LA)



**Venerable Maria del Refugio,
intercede for us!**

Learn more about our Mother Foundress:
www.mercedariansisters.org/mother-foundress-video-series/

On our Mother Foundress

Our Institute worldwide has decided to dedicate every 21st of the month to praying very intentionally for the canonization of our Mother Foundress,
Venerable Maria del Refugio Aguilar y Torres.

This date was chosen because of the significance of September 21 as the anniversary of her birthday.

We ask that you please join us in offering a prayer on the 21st of every month for the furthering of her Cause!

If you receive any favors through her intercession, please let us know by emailing:
motherfoundress@mercedariansisters.org.

It does not have to be a miracle. Even the smallest answered prayer is more than enough.

Thank you and may God bless you!

A Prayer for the Intercession of Venerable Maria del Refugio

Lord, grant us the grace to see your servant, Venerable Maria del Refugio, raised to sainthood, who in order to satisfy her heart's desire founded this Congregation destined to spread the love of the Blessed Sacrament through the Christian education of children and youth.

Grant us through her intercession the grace that we ask for
(state petition)

we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

New collaborations with the St. Paul Center!



The St. Paul Center, founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, promotes life-transforming Scripture Study from the heart of the Church. We are honored to partner with them to bring you to a deeper encounter with the Most Holy Trinity.

APRIL 6–MAY 24

50-Day Challenge *from* Easter Monday *to* Pentecost Sunday



1

Learn to Accompany *with* Fr. Boniface Hicks

Reflect with Fr. Boniface Hicks on how Jesus patiently formed His disciples as He accompanied them on the road to Emmaus, and how He accompanies us today on our own Emmaus journeys.



2

Know the Covenants *with* Dr. Jeff Morrow

Learn from Dr. Jeff Morrow as he unpacks the biblical covenants, showing how God accompanied humanity back to Himself throughout salvation history.



3

Witness the Holy Spirit *with* the Mercedarian Sisters

Discover with the Mercedarian Sisters how, through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, you can join Jesus' life-giving work, accompanying others on their journey to Him.

Easter Challenge

Available now for subscribers to their Digital Library, join us as we reflect each week on a different Gift of the Holy Spirit!

www.stpaulcenter.com/easter



Pentecost Bible Study

Our sisters share Reflections on the Mass Readings for Pentecost Sunday, available on the St. Paul Center YouTube Channel for Pentecost.

www.youtube.com/@StPaulCenter

How you can support us

We are often asked how we can be supported. Our first answer will always be by your prayers and spiritual sacrifices! These, offered on behalf of all of our sisters, sustain us and are invaluable to living out our call.

As we continue to grow and spread the love of the Blessed Sacrament, the following are particular ways our Institute is in need of financial support:

1) NOVITIATE HOUSE BUILDING FUND

Since the Novitiate House Building project was announced in Winter 2021, we have raised \$4.2 Million of the \$5.2 Million cost. Thanks be to God, our Sisters in Formation have been living in the beautiful new House of Formation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for nearly two years now, but there still remains \$1 Million of the building costs to pay off. The sisters living in the House of Formation do not receive a constant source of income due to the nature this being a time of formation, so we ask for your generosity in helping to alleviate this debt so that our sisters can focus on prayer and studies in this critical time of formation.

Donate Online:

www.mercedariansisters.org/novitiate-house-building-fund/

Donate via Check:

Made payable to “Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament” and please specify that it is for the Novitiate House Building Fund.

Mail to us directly at: 17560 George O’Neal Rd. Baton Rouge, LA 70817

2) VISIT OUR DONATE PAGE

Our website’s donate page has ways you can support various funds for our Region, and in the next few months, it will be updated to include ways to support each convent.

www.mercedariansisters.org/donate/

In Gratitude

We are so thankful to all of you who continue to support us in our Eucharistic-Mercedarian vocations and our redemptive mission. We hope to continue to spread the fire of Eucharistic love, first through our prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and then through our education and evangelization efforts. We continue to pray for you in all our chapels before our Eucharistic Lord.



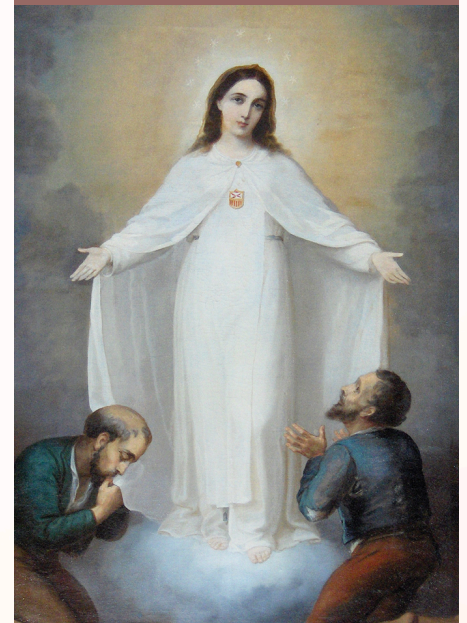
Connect With Us!

MercedarianSisters.org



Vocational Inquiries

[MercedarianSisters.org/
inquiry-form/](https://MercedarianSisters.org/inquiry-form/)



*Our Lady of Mercy,
pray for us!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer

Sisters will be attending Summer Camps in the following places throughout this Summer:

- Call to Holiness (Savannah, Georgia)
- Life Teen Camp Covecrest (Tiger, Georgia)
- Duc In Altum (Charlotte, North Carolina)
- Mid-City Mission (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)
- Blossom Catholic Girls Summer Camp (Burnet, Texas)
- Camp DeSales (Brooklyn, Michigan)
- Catholic Youth Summer Camp (Centerburg, Ohio)

July

22 First Profession

August

2 Entrance to Postulancy
15 Entrance to Novitiate