



# The Porter

St. Conrad Fraternity, Annapolis, MD  
 Secular Franciscan Order – December 2019  
<http://stconradannapolis.sfousa.org/>

## Council

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The Porter deadline for the January issue is January 8. **Please send news, prayer requests, poems, or interesting items** that you think other members may enjoy to: Chris Grubach, 3727 Westfield Ct, Edgewater, MD 21037, or send by email (address above).

 <b>Fraternity Meeting</b>	<b>Saturday, December 21, 2019</b> <b>St. John the Evangelist, 607 Ritchie Hwy., Severna Park, MD 21146</b> <b>8:30 Mass – Church. Meeting 9:15 – <u>Meeting Room in Church</u></b> <b>Note:</b> The men's group has the room until 8:30. Items can be place on the ledge in the hallway or in the kitchen... but very quietly.
 <b>Refreshments</b>	We will have our extra special Christmas Brunch. Everyone is invited to bring something... but not too much. Glen Burnie/Pasadena has supplies and hopefully will not forget to bring them. Annapolis/Eastern Shore will be next, so please arrange to take the supplies home and restock if necessary.
<b>Liturgy</b>	Morning Prayer, Saturday, 3rd Week of Advent -- Annapolis/Eastern Shore <i>Liturgy of the Hours:</i> Vol I, Ordinary: 653, Proper of Seasons: 355, Psalter: 1034 <i>Christian Prayer (single volume):</i> Ordinary: 689, Proper of Seasons: 128, Psalter: 916
<b>Program</b>	Christmas Brunch & Day of Reflection
 <b>Prayer Requests</b>	<i>For our sick and/or homebound members:</i> (Please help us update this list) Bill Mulqueen, Marlane Peterson (president of Ixcan Ministries), Mary Henry, Ruth Shea's daughter, Audrey Donnelly, Joan's husband Bill Kvetkas, Pat Troup, Brigid Cobb, Joe McHugh's brother John, Mary Henry's daughter-in-law Katherine, Evelyn Jones' niece, Genny Wilbourne's family members who are experiencing mental challenges, Kathleen Sievers' niece Mandy and her son Michael
<b>Birthdays</b>	Dennis Mallon – 12/17                      Jenny Moreira – 12/31 Marie Shelton – 12/26                      George Ryan – 1/16
<b>Profession Anniversaries</b>	Harry Thompson – 1/10/1991 Lita Millan – 1/10/2002
<b>Treasury</b>	Current balance: \$ 1, 251.28 Please use the memo line to indicate how your contribution is to be allocated: Common Fund, and/or Phoenix Academy Backpacks (weekend food), and/or bus tokens (for Light House residents).

<b>Outreach</b>	<b>Lighthouse Shelter Lunches:</b> December lunches will not be on its normal date but will move to Thursday, December 19, 9:30 a.m. at home of Joan K. <b>Phoenix Academy “Backpacks”:</b> Wednesday, December 18, 12:30. Denise has increased the number of backpacks from 24 to 30 at the request of the school.
<b>Council Meeting</b>	Friday, January 3, 2020 at 9:30, location to be determined.
<b>Save the Date</b>	<b>January 24, 2020</b> – National March for Life, Washington, DC <b>February 29, 2020</b> – Social Ministry Convocation <b>March 28, 2020, 8:30 am – 3:00:</b> Day of Reflection: A Franciscan Lenten Journey of Hope at Archbishop Curley High School. Speakers: Fr. Donald Grzymiski OFM Conv, Br. Emmanuel Wenke OFM Conv, Friar Christopher Dudek OFM Conv. <b>April 4, 2020, 8:30 am – 4:00:</b> Franciscan Day of Reflection for Inquirers and Candidates and Newly Professed with Fr. Paul Dressler, OFM Cap. <b>May 29-31.</b> Regional Retreat, Priestfield, WV. Facilitator: Fr. Kevin Treston, OFM <b>June 13, 2020</b> (tentative) date of Br. Diogo’s ordination to the priesthood <b>September ??, 2020</b> (tentative) date of Br. Rigo’s ordination to the priesthood ----- <b>August 18-22, 2021.</b> Quinquennial in Phoenix, AZ

## COMMUNITY

### ***Minister’s Minute:***



First off, many THANKS to the outgoing Fraternity Council members: Pat & Judith Tyrrell, Mary Henry, and Kathleen Sievers. They have set a high bar for the next council to follow. And special THANKS to Denise Miente who is remaining on the council for her third term as Formation Director! Please pray for the new council and assist us by letting us know of any ideas, activities or speakers that would help build up our fraternity and Franciscan Spirituality.

It may take a bit of time to get things up and running smoothly with the new council. However, I am very happy with those who said ‘yes’ to serving on the new council. I believe it will be a strong council and look forward to working with the others. In case you missed the election, the new council is as follows. You can always find contact information for the council on page 1 of *The Porter*.

- Minister – Joan Faltot
- Vice Minister – Catherine Gonzalez
- Secretary – Chris Grubach
- Treasurer – Joe McHugh
- Formation Director – Denise Miente
- At-Large Councilors – Jeanne Gaes and Genny Wilbourne

Please take time to discuss your ideas with one or more of the council members. Let us know what you like about our fraternity and what activities or topics you would like to see and our fraternity take on. AND.... Remember that every member of our fraternity has the responsibility to support and help the fraternity grow. And as Chris assumes editorial direction of *The Porter*, I am sure he would appreciate receiving articles, news, poems, photographs to include in our newsletter.

Wishing everyone and their families a blessed Christmas and a fruitful New Year, Joan

## OUR REJANI ROY PUTHUVAL FAMILY IN INDIA

As mentioned in our November Porter, construction has begun on a home for our new family in India. All the concrete work is done and the remaining cost for the remaining work is \$2,800. Perhaps you will think of them when considering your year-end spending and donations. You may send any donations directly to the Franciscan Family Apostolate (checks made out to the same with a note in the Memo line "Rejani Roy house #1178" and mail it to the

Franciscan Family Apostolate  
93 Country Way  
Madison, CT 06443

For more information about the FFA, check out their website at (<https://franciscanfamilyapostolate.org/>)

And we have received Christmas letters from Bishop James Anaparambil, Bishop of Alleppey, and from our family.

From James Raphael Anaparambil, Bishop of Alleppey, Christmas 2019 letter.

Dear Friend and Benefactor of FFA,

I am overcome with joy to reach you with the Advent and Christmas wishes. I am writing to you for the first time as the bishop of the diocese of Alleppey. Bishop Stephy Athipozhiyil retired from the pastoral care of the diocese of Alleppey on October 11, 2019. At the outset I would request you to pray for our diocese, for me and all our people as much depends on prayer and help that come from above.

I have been fortunate to associate with FFA and its activities for many years. I remember with gratitude the support I and my mother received from Ms. Mary Schubert, one of the benefactors of FFA during my seminary studies to pay for the tuition and boarding. Mr. Alan Ouimet founded this charity in our diocese in the early 70's and ever since this has been top charity work in the diocese. I thank you personally for your generous participation in this beautiful work. I earnestly encourage you to continue your support which is an indispensable help for many in this place. The poor you support raise their heart with heartfelt thanks to God asking Him to bless you.

From Rejani Roy, Christmas 2019

Dear Friends,

First of all I am thanking you sincerely for your regular help which is giving much hope and relief in our life. May the God Almighty bless you in abundance through our patron St. Francis Assisi.

I am happy to inform you that this year there was St. Francis Feast day celebration in our cathedral church with Holy Mass by Bishop emeritus Stephen Athipozhiyil. In that occasion we get a chance to see the director of FFA Alan Ouimet his son Mathew and another board member Richard Fitzpatrick. Their presence made the occasion more colourful and joyful. After the Holy Mass there was meeting, various programmes by children of FFA beneficiaries to entertain the guest. This function ended with a great meal. We remembered our loving sponsors in that occasion and specially pray for you all.

Your help is using for the study needs of children and also for food clothing and medicines. I am glad to mention that a house is under construction for us through government scheme. The work is almost finished. Soon we able to live in it.

We are nearing to the Christmas days. So we take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a New Year of prosperity. Our Christmas prayers we are dedicating for your family's well being.

Yours Sincerely, Rejani Roy

## **APOSTOLIC LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE**

Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate. FRANCIS

Extracts from the Apostolic Letter follow. For the complete letter see:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2019/12/01/0953/01938.html#en>

1. The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him....

2. ... Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food" (Sermon 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the "Poor Man of Assisi" had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The Franciscan Sources describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire "to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay". At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present.

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, "everyone went home with joy".

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. Indeed, the place where this first nativity scene was enacted expresses and evokes these sentiments. Greccio has become a refuge for the soul, a mountain fastness wrapped in silence.

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally,

the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to “feel” and “touch” the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

4. I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man...

5. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (Lk 2:15). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God’s presence in our midst.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod’s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized....

7. Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God’s will. By her “fiat”, Mary became the mother of God’s Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary’s side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod’s threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of

Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

8. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all....

"Life was made manifest" (1 Jn 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

9. As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche.... These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial.

As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love.

The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, athirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1-12). Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King.... Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

10. ....Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. ...

## INTERESTING EVENT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



**Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land  
Washington, DC  
November 30, 2019 – January 5, 2020**

Warm your heart and see the Holy Family through the eyes of those from many other cultures as you view over 150 Nativities from countries all over the world. This special collection that speaks to the universality of our faith is on loan to the Monastery from Roger and Marguerite Sullivan.

Watch the short video on the web site where Roger & Marguerite Sullivan describe how they started collecting and see pictures of a few of their favorite creches. <https://myfranciscan.org/event/nativities-of-the-world-display-2/>

## MARY'S MISSION IN AMERICA

*Judith Tyrell found this article for the Porter which highlights the Franciscan connections to the story of Guadalupe--the friars who helped convert Juan Diego and the bishop who was a Franciscan.*

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, first appeared in Sacred Scripture as a young Jewish girl living in Nazareth. When the angel Gabriel came to her with God's message, she responded with her "yes", voluntarily turning her will over to God's Will for her. She became the first follower of Jesus, continually believing in Him and supporting His work in her state of life. Conceived without original sin, but fully human, Mary is the perfect example for us all. Since God's favor rests upon her and she is closer to God than any other human, she is also the perfect help for everyone.

Over the centuries Mary has appeared in many times and places, always as a beautiful, caring woman concerned about both specific happenings and problems of that time, offering help and instruction for all people. She is the very same Ever Virgin Mary, but she is remembered by different names for the places she has appeared or the missions she requested. Many have heard of Our Lady of Fatima (1917 in Portugal) or Our Lady of Lourdes (1858 in France), but Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531 in Mexico) is perhaps not as well known.

It is a wonderful story and so appropriate because Mary appeared in America (there were no country boundaries at that time), and she was pronounced Empress or Queen of the Americas by the Pope. By knowing and reflecting about Mary's appearance at Guadalupe, perhaps we can be inspired to pray more, turn more to God, do His Will better, and lead others to Him.



The story begins with an Aztec Indian, Juan Diego, walking to Holy Mass on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception near what is now Mexico City in 1531. He had become a Catholic through the work of the Franciscan Friars who came to this new Land after it had been conquered for Spain by Hernando Cortez some thirty years earlier. Although the victory of Cortez stopped the almost unimaginable horror of the human sacrifices of the Aztecs to their gods, estimated by some to be 50,000 lives a year, many Spanish leaders unfortunately did other evils as they succumbed to the greed and oppressive power in their grasp. To many native peoples the Spanish rule did not seem much better, therefore the Spanish religion of Catholicism did not fare well.

But all this was to change. As Juan Diego passed a rocky place called Tepeyac Hill, he fell to his knees dazzled by a bright light and heavenly music. Looking up he saw a beautiful Lady who smiled at him and told him:

*"Know for certain, my son, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God through whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near and far, the Master of heaven and earth. It is my earnest wish that a church be built here to my honor. Here I will ... give all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people.*

*"I am your merciful mother, the merciful mother of all of you living united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who seek me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their sorrow, and will remedy and alleviate all their multiple sufferings, necessities, and misfortunes. Go to the house of the bishop in Mexico and tell him what I have told you. Tell him of my desire for a church to be built on this site in my honor."*

Juan Diego went immediately and told the bishop, a good and faith-filled man named Fray Zumarraga, about the message of the Mother of God. Although the Bishop listened patiently before dismissing him, Juan Diego felt that he really wasn't believed and discouragedly went back to Tepeyac Hill. Our Lady was waiting there and assured him that he was the one chosen especially for this task and that she did not need or desire a noble or chief person. He was told to go and repeat her request. Still the Bishop had doubts. This could be just a made-up fictional account. After all, Juan Diego was just an ordinary and poor country man, a humble villager. Could Juan Diego bring some proof of his story that Our Blessed Lady had appeared to him and given this request?



Mary assured Juan that she would give him a sign in the morning, and he returned home joyfully only to find his uncle, Juan Bernardino with whom he lived, very ill. Because Juan took care of his uncle all the next day, he missed meeting with Our Lady. So the following day as he went to get a priest for Bernardino who was dying, Juan avoided Tepeyac Hill because he thought Mary would be upset with him for his not having met her the previous day. Instead, Mary met him on the path; consoling him and telling him not to fear for his uncle's life, she said:

*"Listen, my son. Do not be troubled nor disturbed by anything; do not fear illness nor any grievous happening, nor pain. Are you not under my shadow, my protection? Are you not in my favor and do you not go on my errand? Do you need anything else? Do not be troubled or take thought of your uncle's illness for he will not die and is well even now (which, as it turns out, he was!) Go now to the top of the hill, and there you will find roses blooming. Pick as many as you can hold in your cloak and bring them to me."*



Flowers had never been seen on this rocky area where only cactus could thrive, but Juan Diego trusted Mary and obediently went to the top of the hill where he saw a profusion of beautiful, fragrant roses. He picked as many as he could and brought them to Our Lady who arranged them herself carefully in his cloak or "tilma," as it was called.

Joyfully he went to Bishop Zumarraga who had been praying for just such a sign. As Juan Diego opened his tilma to reveal the roses, the bishop, at the same instant as the roses dropped to the ground, witnessed the appearance of the Image of Our Lady on the rough cactus fabric. Falling to his knees he thanked God for this heavenly gift.

Bishop Zumarraga built the church that Mary requested, and to this day the tilma of Juan Diego with the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is still exhibited in the Basilica that is now in Mexico City. Millions of pilgrims visit it every year, marvelling at the colors and detail of this image which has been preserved far beyond the usual life of the cactus fiber material. Besides this, the image seems to have a natural life-like quality like no other known portrait. Some think it resembles a photograph. However, in 1531, photography had not been developed.

As can be imagined, when word of this beautiful picture first began spreading among the native people, they flocked to see it. The message of the visions and the symbolism of Our Lady's portrait, as they interpreted it, had tremendous significance. In great numbers they turned to the God to whom Mary was praying. Over eight million Indians were converted in the next seven years. What a great evangelizer Mary is!

Still today, as people all over the world visit this holy place, they are inspired and renewed. Since she appears pregnant in the image, Our Lady of Guadalupe has come to represent in a special way the pro-life movement. In the United States we now have available 11"x14" blessed reproductions of the upper portion of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, called the Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which travels from home to home. The purpose of the Pilgrim Image is to draw people back to the Lord in a spirit of thanksgiving for our Faith, reparation for past injuries in our Church, for healing within families to promote family and pro-life values, and to teach and spread the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ who is Divinely Merciful and Loving.

### **Annual pilgrimage for the 'Brown Virgin' in D.C.**

On December 14, about 2,000 walked with the statue for two miles from the Shrine of the Sacred Heart [staffed by our Capuchins] in Columbia Heights to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was the annual procession to honor the patroness of the Americas, the "Brown Virgin," as she's known. But it came at a time when many Latino worshipers are concerned about the troubles faced by immigrants and refugees. The procession stopped four times for short speeches and prayers before reaching the basilica. The four times represent the four instances the Lady of Guadalupe, appeared before Juan Diego, a native Mexican peasant in the 1500s. [\[Click here to read full article\]](#)