

Resurrexit,
sicut dixit,
Alleluia!

Dear Friends of the Mission of Divine Mercy,

Dear Brothers and Sisters
in the Heart of the Eternal Father –

The earth is drenched in Grace during Eastertide, these fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. This Season—the most solemn and sacred of the entire Church year—is awash in the Golden Blood of Jesus Crucified. No matter what we are living at the material level this is not a time to be preoccupied or discouraged; the hands of our heart should be turned palms-up in adoration, supplication, and praise. Our minds, our hearts, our bodies, and our souls need to embrace this triumphant season of Our Hope.

*“Worthy are You to receive the scroll
and break open its seals,
for You were slain...” (Rev. 5:9)*

*“Father, accept this Easter candle, a flame divided
but undimmed, a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.
Let it mingle with the lights of Heaven and continue bravely
burning to dispel the darkness of this night!*

*May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ, that Morning Star,
Who came back from the dead, and shed His peaceful light on all mankind, Your Son who lives and reigns
for ever and ever...”*

(from the beautiful ‘Exsultet’, or Easter Proclamation, sung at the Easter Vigil)

INSIDE: THE SAGA OF MARIA FELICITAS

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of Angels! Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen! Sound the trumpet of salvation!



The Sacred Triduum; the Great Feast of Easter; then Divine Mercy Sunday...an embarrassment of riches. But for us Resurrection and Mercy came early. On March 31st we received an **emotional message** from Kate Sinkins, our attorney at Catholic Legal Immigration Network:

"I've just received some amazing, terrific news. The Department of Homeland Security Office of Special Counsel has just called. The appeal for Maria Felicitas was sustained!!!...You guys have been just great; all the letters and praying up a storm. It made a difference...It's been a joy working on this case for people who deserve it. God is indeed good to all of us."

We want to pass on to you the text of that message; also our deep gratitude for the astonishing outpouring of prayers, letters, and labor on behalf of Maria Felicitas and her immigration status.

Since she arrived at Catholic Solitudes in 1997 we had been patiently plodding the path of bureaucratic due-process to gain permanent religious worker status for Maria Felicitas. But when we left Catholic Solitudes and took on a new canonical identity as the Mission of Divine Mercy it seemed to muddy the waters. The fact that she **did not have final vows** suddenly called into question the validity of her request for permanent status as a religious worker. (As a new canonical entity we do not yet make final vows. For the moment, none of us has them.) Ultimately this viewpoint was proven to be a misapplication of the law. But only after an amazing amount of networking, effort and prayer on the part of all our friends.

When Maria Felicitas' request for a visa was denied last fall our attorney immediately filed for an appeal; and our **long, arduous uphill climb** began.

Brother Moses moved into the position of in-house Immigration Advocate, and Sr. Amapola and Maria Felicitas struggled to keep up with the paperwork that seemed to grow with each mail delivery.

To give you some idea of what we were up against, we were told that **no appeal for a religious worker had been sustained in the last two years**. The overwhelming odds against our request were repeatedly brought home to us in the next months as we were told by various officials and offices, "She shouldn't be here"; "It would take an army of support"; "You'd need a miracle."

In fact, a miracle is what we got.

We'd sent out a cry for help in our October Newsletter and responses quickly started to come in. A friend had a friend who had a friend....Contacts began to surface with influential citizens such as **Christina Zamora**, County Commissioner; local Congressman **Lamar Smith**, **Ciro Rodriguez** (whose wife also came graciously to our aid), **Charlie Gonzalez**; our State Representative **Carter Casteel**; and the Department of Homeland Security. The feedback was frequently not encouraging. But slowly, slowly we began to amass a network of contacts and information leading us forward.

At one point last winter, things **began to seem hopeless**. Only God knows all the quiet effort that so many made on our behalf; but we are aware of **two things that happened**: First, Maria Felicitas made an urgent appeal to the Holy Angels and the Holy Souls in Purgatory. And she began to harass them daily. Secondly, a parishioner—prompted by the Lord's directive while in the Adoration Chapel—gathered a handful of people together to galvanize a massive grass-roots campaign of letter-writing, phone-calling, e-mailing, and above all prayer, in defense and support of our appeal. This brought new life to our efforts, drew new contacts and support, and prompted further political intervention.

On March 17th our local **Congressman Lamar Smith**, in collaboration with **Congressman John Hostetler** of Indiana, wrote to the **Director of**

For Christ has ransomed us with His Blood, and paid for us the price
of Adam's sin to our Eternal Father!

It is truly right that with full hearts and minds and voices we should praise the Unseen God, the All-powerful Father, and His only Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

the Bureau of Immigration. In a firm, incisive brief he critiqued the earlier decision of the case; noted the discrepancies between the written code and its particular application, and called for a more consistent and uniform administration of this code throughout the country. **On March 31st we heard that the appeal was sustained....**

We know many quiet stories of grace strewn along the path of this effort. One we include below:

In February a parishioner who had business in Washington, DC, arranged to stay an extra day to visit Congressman Lamar Smith's office on our behalf. He had an appointment with his Legislative Counsel, Allison Beach, who received him graciously and showed a quick, sure grasp of the issues at hand. During that time Congressman Smith showed up briefly and, before he left, assured our friend that he would receive a full de-briefing from his Counsel with regard to our case. We print here the e-mail account of his experience as he described it to his wife:

"I finished by telling her that prayer had brought me to his office and I was appreciative of the time she had given me and I got up and left. As I was leaving his office something strange came over me. I had prayed driving in for God to give me the right words before going in, and felt like the spirit was with me the minute I stepped into the building, and especially the whole time I was talking - so I went back out in front of the building and began to pray. I thanked the Lord for the gift of speech he had just given me and I asked him to protect the Mission of Divine Mercy and especially Maria Felicitas...then I tried to listen like Father John has taught me while in prayer....

....the Lord came over me and told me He heard me... "I HEAR YOU"

that's what He told me. Not - I'll fix it or anything else, just - "I hear you"... I heard it very clearly...I was so moved that I had to lean

against the building to keep from falling down - The Lord had just told me that He heard me!!!... I stayed in prayer as long as I could and then I staggered into the street.

the next 15 minutes, of walking past the Capitol and to my car were the most relaxing time I've had in a long time...I could feel no work stress, no cares about mail or email,, no worries of safety for my family, no concern for money or materials or bills, no worries about yesterday or tomorrow...just fresh air and the words of God over and over "I hear you"...I could have walked for hours - I wish I had...

I don't pretend to know what's going to happen to Maria Felicitas, but I know God is taking care of her..."

Many of you were part of this widespread campaign: and you are familiar with the basic events. But we wanted to give you **the larger picture**: We wanted you to know that our attorney said she'd never before seen such an outpouring of support on behalf of a single individual; that Congressman Smith's Office said they have a file of letters 3" thick (they stopped

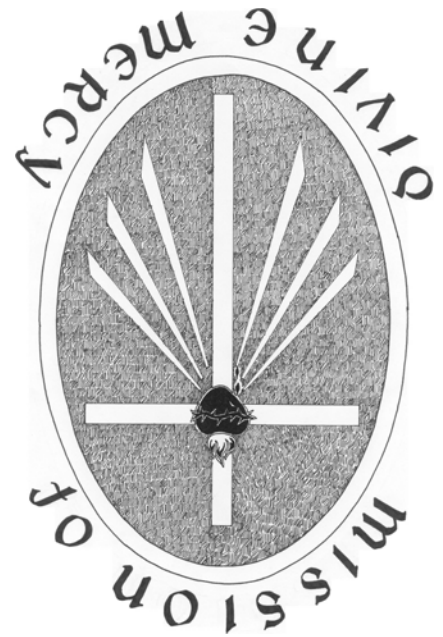
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Special request from Father John Mary:

"It would take a miracle!" Despite the great obstacles, we have just experienced another example of the power of prayer which is capable of altering the course of history. Because of this, Dear Friends, we feel compelled to mobilize once again your prayer and faith.

We ask you to join with us in beseeching God for a very special intention: for a great new outpouring of His Divine Mercy on our suffering, struggling world today. We will be united with you each day in this prayer.

Father, how wonderful Your care for us! How boundless Your merciful love!
To ransom a slave You gave away Your Son!



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counting at 300) for Maria Felicitas; that when we called Congressman Hostetler's secretary she said *"The whole office is still talking about the religious worker from Texas."*

We wanted you to know that we are **profoundly in your debt**. You prayers and work can alter the course of history. They certainly have altered the history of the Mission of Divine Mercy. But above all we wanted you to know **what the Lord has said to you, to Maria Felicitas, to all of us** by way of our friend. **He has said, is saying, and continues to say, "I HEAR YOU."**

And now you know the rest of the story....

Sr. Magdalene ♦



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Encounter with Jesus Retreats

We are happy to say that the retreats are beginning to fill up quickly, so if you or anyone you know would like to attend the retreat, we encourage you to register as soon as possible.

Upcoming retreat dates:

September 10-12, 2004 (Women)

October 22-24, 2002 (Men)

December 10-12, 2004 (???)

For more information or to register, please contact Kathryn Lamke at (830) 627-0117.

Please keep the retreatants and team who will make the Encounter this May (14-16) in your prayers.