

Living the Spirit  
October 13

This week we will celebrate two important days for the Church. On Wednesday the Church of Allentown celebrates the Feast of its heavenly Patroness. Mary is that Mother who watches over our Diocese under her title of **Mary, Mother of the Church**. It was Bishop McShea who chose this title at the beginning of our Diocese. No doubt, he was inspired in his choice by the fact that he attended the Second Vatican Council. At its close Pope Paul VI gave Mary this title. He wanted the people of God, the Church, to bring Mary into their lives as a Mother. He commended the Church to her motherly care.

If you ever go into a church sacristy you are likely to find there a small book called the Ordo. It is published every year for each Diocese and lists the calendar of the various feasts and Masses. On the left side of the page, it publishes the Necrology (list of death) of the deceased priests of the Diocese. It finds room to note the special diocesan feasts, such as we celebrate this week. It will also note the day when the Cathedral Church is commemorated in the liturgy. It reminds us as well of the dates of the Bishop's anniversary.

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On October 13<sup>th</sup> the entire Church will remember a great event in the life of the Church. It was on October 13, 1917, 100 years ago, that Mary appeared at Fatima to three children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francesco. She had promised in a previous appearance to them: "I will perform a miracle for all to believe."

We know that she kept her promise. There was the Miracle of the Sun, as it came to be called. It was witnessed by a large crowd, who braved the heavy rainfall. The crowd turned towards the sun which appeared at its zenith, clear of the clouds. It resembled a flat plate of silver, and it was possible to stare at it without the least discomfort. It did not burn the eyes. There were shouts of Miracle, Miracle! The sun trembled, made strange and abrupt movements, outside of all cosmic laws; 'the sun danced,' as the peasants typically described it.

The three children saw Our Lady, who gave them more messages. She asked for amendment to lives, to ask for forgiveness to sins, to say the rosary every day. Three scenes followed symbolizing the three decades' mysteries. The last vision was of Our Lady crowned queen of heaven, holding the Child Jesus near her heart. From this event after careful investigation Catholics who believe and have faith accept that Mary really did come to be for our world a "mother for every emergency," as someone has written.

A simple question – don't we need her help now? Another question – what should we do? Perhaps, do what Jesus said at Cana: "Do whatever she tells you."

It was my joy to be able to have been to Fatima three times. Fatima is not another Lourdes. It is different. For my visits, it was a quiet not crowded place. On one visit I was on a tour; on the second, I was alone; and on the third visit I was with Father Morrell, celebrating in a way my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. In these visits I expected no miracle. Yet, I always think it right to say that Mary cannot fail to give some gift of grace, having asked it from her Son.

Fatima today is more and more developed as a shrine. People still feel compelled to make a pilgrimage to the place. I have never heard anyone regret the fact that they made a visit there. One thing that stands out in the great celebrations of the 13<sup>th</sup> of the months of May and October is the knowledge that in our love of Mary, as our Mother, we are not alone. We are the People of God, the Church. Fortunate children to have this Mother!

***Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.  
Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us.***

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I would like to give here an update about myself. People often ask me in their charity how I am doing. I find it difficult to describe at times how I should answer. Perhaps it would be wise to say I am as good as the Lord allows me to be. At age 88, I am aware of what the years mean.

For many years now I have had the joy of living at Our Lady. The center of this existence has been Monsignor Sacks, who as pastor was always a welcoming friend and colleague. I can hardly believe it is now over 26 years that I have been here as a resident. Of course, no one person, not even a priest, or pastor, or other worker in the parish makes the parish what it is. We all have a part in that. I think most people find Our Lady a parish of welcomes and of smiles.

I have decided that it is time for me to gradually leave aside the familiar comfort so enjoyed here. At times I will live at our Villa. I foresee my transition to be very gradual, if only because I find I have so much to discard. I have been working on some things, like the few family pictures that came to me as the last of the family. I also have somewhat reluctantly looked at things that have been meaningful to me. [A few of my inner circle may know that Miss Piggy has to go. She was always a reminder of my days at St. Francis and a graduating eighth grade.]

I have been blessed as a priest to live in the area of this diocese for 63 years. I still pray for those I taught at Allentown Central. I know some pray for me. I lived in various places. St. Francis in Allentown was my home as a resident for five years and later as pastor for 17. I think of my first parish in Boyertown, where I still receive a Christmas card from one remaining friend of that long-ago time. I miss the work at the Tribunal, but I know it is a bit much now for me. I enjoy writing these inserts, because I see it as a ministry. It is sometimes a not too subtle way of giving continuing knowledge about the Church to the reader. It reminds the reader that we all must grow in our knowledge of the Lord. Remember: God made us to know Him, and to love Him. Let us not fail to share that special spiritual and holy love which binds us to the Lord.

*God bless and love you always!  
Monsignor David Morrison*