

# A HISTORIC PARISH EVENT

by JOHN M. HAFFERT

In 1954 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical titled *Ad Coeli Reginam* in which the Holy Father said that on the Feast of the Queenship of Mary there should be renewed everywhere, an act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Pope went so far as to say that he "commanded" this annual Act of Consecration.

On May 13, 1967, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Signum Magnum* in which His Holiness called for the consecration of individuals and especially of parishes and dioceses to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

And now Pope John Paul II has repeatedly spoken of the importance of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in each country where he has traveled he has repeated the Act of Consecration.

Yet, how few individuals, and how few parishes, have ever made the Act of Consecration not only as asked by the Vicar of Christ, but even as "commanded"?

## Commanded!

At Fatima, Our Lady said, "God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart."

And these Acts of Consecration are more than simply an act of "honor" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

They are acts with tremendous spiritual efficacy.

They are acts which recognize the role of Mary as a Queen who has certain "rights" over us and that we now come to place ourselves intimately under Her mantle, recognizing the tremendous power of Her prayer at the throne of God, and the calling upon that great power to bring Jesus more intimately into our own lives, into our own parish.



On front cover of this issue, Msgr. Dixon is shown blessing the statue. Above, Mary Sullivan, Blue Army leader and donor of the statue, thanks Msgr. Dixon.

In recognition of the desire of God to establish the devotion of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in obedience to the Vicar of Christ, on Sunday, March 15, the parish of St. Sebastian in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., was solemnly consecrated.

Msgr. Francis P. Dixon, pastor, prepared for this event with an announcement the previous week that the consecration would take place at the 11 o'clock Mass on the following Sunday, and a copy of the consecration prayer was printed in that week's issue of the church bulletin.

The church was filled on the day of the consecration, and in his homily Msgr. Dixon explained the Blue Army Pledge and the meaning of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He said:

"For several years we have already had the First Saturday Devotion in this parish, but we want to see it expand. Many of you are

already making the nine First Fridays in honor of the Sacred Heart. So it is a simple matter to remember on the next day to follow through with the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in keeping with the desires of God expressed at Fatima and to obtain the great promise Our Lady has made for this devotion."

He added that he desired every member of his parish should be a member of the Blue Army, and then he explained the Blue Army Pledge point for point.

"Every sensible person would make the Morning Offering," he said. "And anyone who says that he cannot spare ten minutes a day to pray the Rosary is a liar. And the only other thing we are asked to do is to wear the Scapular of Mt. Carmel as a sign of our consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Msgr. Dixon went on to explain the acceptance by the Church, in

the person of various Popes, of the importance of the Message of Fatima, and of our need to implement this Message in order to bring about the conversion of Russia and world peace.

Then accompanied by the acolytes and lector, he proceeded to bless a beautiful four foot high wood carving of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, after which the entire congregation repeated the Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"By this act we consecrate each and every member of our parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," the pastor concluded. "And this beautiful statue will now be enshrined in the side chapel between the statues of St. Therese and St. Sebastian, our patron, as a lasting memorial of this consecration as a sign that we have confided this parish to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary." Following the Mass and ceremony, the congregation was invited to visit the side chapel where the statue was

solemnly placed and to be enrolled in the Brown Scapular.

Blue Army Cells began in St. Sebastian's parish many years before, and repeatedly over the years the pastor had been asked to have the First Saturday Devotions and to encourage the Blue Army. It was only *after many years of perseverance* that this marvelous act of the consecration of the parish was achieved.

Who can measure the blessings that may now be expected upon this fortunate parish? All the Popes of our time, from Pius XII on, have either mentioned, suggested, or specifically *commanded* individual and parish Acts of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady Herself said at Fatima that now "*God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.*"

"So My Entire Church Will Know"

And when, under obedience, Lucia asked why the acts of conse-

cration of Russia had not proved sufficient to bring about the conversion of that country, Our Lord answered that He desired that it be done not only by the Holy Father but also *by all the Bishops simultaneously with the Pope* in order that "My entire Church will know that it is through the Immaculate Heart of My Mother that this favor is obtained, so that devotion to Her Immaculate Heart may be placed alongside devotion to My own Sacred Heart."

The leaders of Blue Army groups in the parish of St. Sebastian who patiently prayed and petitioned until this desire and command of the Popes, and desire of God Himself, was realized, made this tremendous spiritual action possible.

Through the holiness generated within the parish by the cells in their weekly prayers and meetings, this glorious Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart was accomplished. And now, this very same act may be realized *in your own parish!*

## 1982: HER FIFTEENTH YEAR!

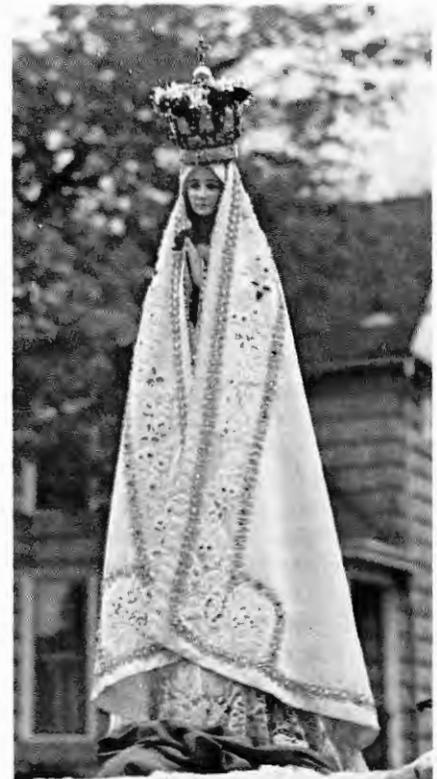
The Pilgrim Virgin statue for the United States was blessed by Pope Paul VI at Fatima on May 13, 1967 and was delivered to the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, for its first official visitation that same October.

Since then, the National Pilgrim Virgin statue, with its custodian, Mr. Al Williams, has been traveling the length and breadth of our land in an appeal to all Americans to heed the Message of Fatima and "to stop offending God Who is already too much offended."

On May 13, 1971, exactly ten years ago, the National Pilgrim Virgin statue was solemnly crowned in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. by Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, then Archbishop of Washington. The occasion was the 25th anniversary

of the solemn coronation of the image of Our Lady of Fatima in the Cova da Iria as the Queen of the World, and on this date in 1971, more than 70 simultaneous coronations were held around the world. While the national ceremony was held in Washington, D.C., many local crownings in the dioceses throughout the country also took place.

And now, 1982 will be the fifteenth year of the travels of the National Pilgrim Virgin statue of the United States. Reservations for scheduling of the "Messenger of Her Royalty" for 1982 are now being accepted. If your diocese has not yet been visited, or if you wish a return visit, be sure to write today... Reserve a month for Her visit, and write your Bishop for his permission. Do it now!



Above: The National Pilgrim Virgin statue of the United States.