

"Our" Felicians... and Pope John Paul 2nd!

by JOHN M. HAFFERT

On April 16, 1969, Mother Mary Virginette, C.S.S.F., came with the four members of her Provincial Council to the Blue Army Center in Washington, N.J. to tell us that they just could not spare sisters for the proposed "Holy House" there.

Before Mother Virginette could give us the bad news I began to speak of our great need of a "heart of prayer" at our National Center. We were interrupted before Mother Virginette could speak. Two priests arrived unexpectedly from Italy and I had to leave the meeting because there was no one else to speak to them in Italian.

A Change of Heart

When I returned to Mother Virginette and the Council, Mother told me that *they had come to say "no," and "impossible to spare Sisters now."* But reflecting on my words about the need for a *heart of prayer* at our Blue Army National Center, she and the Council decided that *no matter what the sacrifice they would send some Sisters here!*

Mother Virginette, who was Provincial of Lodi Province, became the Mother General of the Order. Last year, when Cardinal Wojtyla was elected and took the name Pope John Paul II, Mother Mary Virginette (now the retired Mother General) asked for an audience with the new Pope just shortly before she was to leave Rome. She was able to give only two days notice. And since

the schedule of His Holiness was full, the Pope invited her to his private apartment to assist...with his own household...at his morning Mass.

"I had greeted His Holiness on the day after his election as Pope," Mother Virginette told us, "and when suddenly I was scheduled to leave Rome I hoped at least once to see him more intimately."

After the Mass, the Holy Father marked Mother Virginette's forehead with a little sign of the cross.

"His Holiness had joined in the singing of the Magnificat after Mass," Mother Virginette recalls, "in his beautiful baritone voice. I was thinking of the responsibility he has...not only of 700 million Catholics, but of the world. The majesty and dignity of his high office is however enriched by the simplicity of his person, of his demeanor."

Mother Virginette is now back in Lodi. Her successor in Rome, Mother Mary Amadeus, also did much for the Holy House.



Photo above [of April 16, 1969] has John Haffert and Mother Virginette by statue of St. Joseph with Sisters of the Provincial Council.

Pictured here are at least two of the memorable moments in the life of Mother Virginette: The placing of the statue of St. Joseph where the Holy House was to rise at the National Center of the Blue Army, and her first meeting with the Pope the day after his election.

Sr. Miranda's Role

The coming of the Felicians here was "prepared" by nineteen years of prayer on the part of one Felician: Sr. Mary Miranda, C.S.S.F. All the way back in 1950, when the Blue Army was first beginning to spread, she had obtained over a thousand pledges by writing to people all over the country. Later she and another Felician had come to the National Center and buried medals and wax symbols of their own hearts in the ground as they began what turned out to be more than a decade of prayer for this intention!

