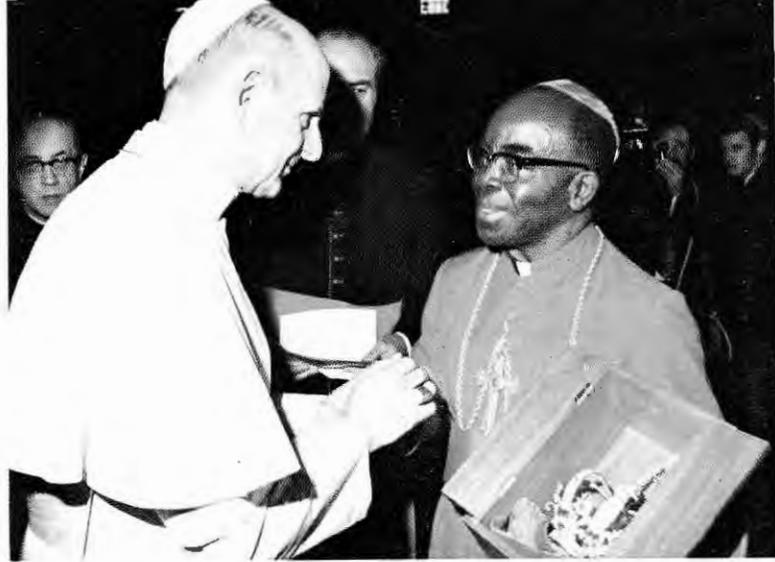


THE QUEEN'S BLUE ARMY

by JOHN M. HAFFERT



His Excellency Bishop Venancio of Fatima presents to Pope Pius XII as His Excellency's messenger from the Blue Army for the worldwide coronation of May 13, 1971.

Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, who was Dean of the College of Cardinals under Pope Pius XII when His Holiness issued the encyclical on the Queenship of Mary, wrote to the French newspaper *l'Homme Nouveau*:

"The Blue Army is a response to the message of Our Lady of Fatima. ...Does not the Queen need an Army?"

His words were almost prophetic. Perhaps no other group in the Church has succeeded more in the subsequent twenty-five years to implement that encyclical than Our Lady's Blue Army.

1954 - World Meeting

In the very year of the encyclical itself, the Blue Army held an international seminar at Fatima to study

Below: Sister Mary Grace, A.M.L., national coordinator of Blue Army organization in the U.S., with statue blessed for Shrine at U.S. National Center last May 13th.



how best to implement the message of the Queen throughout the world. One hundred and sixteen members participated from the U.S. in the blessing of the cornerstone of the Blue Army International Center behind the Basilica in which a plaque proclaims: *"Here, on May 13, 1946, Pope Pius XII crowned Our Lady of Fatima as QUEEN OF THE WORLD."*

In England, a short time later, a Blue Army leader... the Hon. Henrietta Bower...conducted the first *All-Night Vigil* at the Shrine of Walsingham. This was the beginning of a *world-wide movement of All-Night Vigils* in which today tens of thousands participate (on the First Friday-First Saturday).

Came as Legate of Pope

The Blue Army rapidly spread around the world.

Three thousand joined in a Blue Army rally in Paris in 1955.

And the following year, in June, the foundations were laid for a Russian Chapel which (although no one knew at the time) would become a sanctuary for the most celebrated Russian Icon of Our Lady: the Icon of Kazan—center of Russia's greatest devotion through the centuries as Russia's *Protectress and Queen*.

In this same year of 1956, Cardinal Tisserant came to bless the world center of the Blue Army at Fatima as *the Legate of Pope Pius*

XII, the Pope of Our Lady's Queenship. When he returned to Rome, the Cardinal took with him the first international statutes of the Blue Army to be presented to the Holy See for approval.

It was only two years later that Bishop John Venancio was installed as the new Bishop of Fatima. He was to become the first International President of the Blue Army after Msgr. Colgan.

Year of the Secret

1960 was the year of the Fatima Secret. Everyone had been waiting for the contents of a letter which Lucia had placed in a sealed envelope to be confided to the Pope—and to be opened that year.

When the message was not made public, the Bishop of Fatima sent a message through the Blue Army to the world warning against overanxiety concerning the Secret and reminding all that "Prayer, penance, consecration and the First Saturdays should be given our first attention."

First Major Celebration

In July of that year His Excellency came in person to the United States to participate in the Blue Army celebration on July 12 and 13 at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Six thousand persons participated and it was *the first major celebration ever held at America's National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception since its dedication by the U.S. Bishops.*

We do not intend to summarize the entire history of the Blue Army in this report of what has been done in these last years but only major achievements to emphasize devotion to the *Queenship of Mary*.

Padre Pio Becomes Patron

Among the highlights is a letter from Pope John XXIII expressing the "comfort and consolation" he derived from the effect of the Blue Army's work throughout the world in the same year that Padre Pio accepted all who would make the *Blue Army Pledge* as his spiritual children. A few weeks later Pope John XXIII issued the very encouraging *plenary indulgence* for the fulfillment of daily duty in accordance with the request at Fatima (the basic condition of the *Blue Army Pledge*).

Growth in Vietnam

Meanwhile the Blue Army was spreading everywhere in the world, and an event in Saigon (Vietnam) on October 11, 1964 turned out to be of special significance to Our Lady's *Queenship*.

Thousands attended a rally of the Blue Army in Saigon on that day and Pope Paul VI sent a benediction to the Blue Army on that occasion through the Archbishop of Saigon. A Vietnamese major, who first heard of the Blue Army while training at Fort Bragg in the United States, was authorized to organize the Blue Army in Vietnam. The results were astounding.

Through the suffering and the prayers of the people of Vietnam the idea was born for a "National Pil-

grim Virgin." This led a few years later to a world-wide recognition of *Our Lady as Queen, with the consecration of seventy nations to Her Immaculate Heart simultaneously on May 13, 1971.* The story is interesting:

In 1965 the entire Vietnamese hierarchy, accompanied by the Archbishop of Saigon, left Rome during an interval of the Ecumenical Council to go to Fatima to place at the feet of Our Lady "Our hearts, our prayers, and our sacrifices... to implore peace."

Later that year, the same Bishops asked that the Pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima come to Vietnam to visit throughout the country in a nationwide effort to unite the people in prayer for peace.

Special Statues for Each Nation

This gave the Blue Army leaders the idea of having special Pilgrim Virgin statues blessed for each nation which would desire such a statue, and to have them blessed by Pope Paul VI when His Holiness went to Fatima on May 13, 1967 (for the Golden Jubilee of the Fatima apparitions).

The Bishop of Fatima, as International President of the Blue Army, wrote to Bishops in 70 countries around the world offering a statue to each nation. All accepted (except one country—which already had a similar statue).

Blessed by Pope at Fatima

And on May 13th, in the presence of a crowd estimated somewhere between one and two million, *the Pope came to Fatima.* He issued the encyclical *Signum Magnum* calling for personal consecration to the *Immaculate Heart.* And on this oc-

Left: On May 13, 1971, Msgr. Frederick Schwertz, representing the Bishop of Fatima, crowned the Pilgrim Virgin statue at the American Embassy in Moscow at the same time in which other crownings were simultaneously occurring in 71 nations around the world.

JULY-AUGUST 1979



Above: Blue Army pilgrimage with Pilgrim Virgin arrives in Prague, Czechoslovakia. It was the delivery of this Pilgrim Virgin in October, 1967, which caused Cardinal Tomasek, Archbishop of Prague, to say: "You have brought us the sign of our hope."

casion the Pilgrim Virgin statues for nations around the world were blessed. A delegation of Vietnamese came in person to receive the first of these statues and to carry it back to their country.

"The Sign of Our Hope"

Six months later, the Bishop of Fatima himself left in a special plane with more than 100 members of the Blue Army in a flight around the world to deliver statues to various nations, including Czechoslovakia, where Bishop Tomasek (later Cardinal) receiving the statue said:

"You have brought us the sign of our hope."

In subsequent trips with the Bishop, Blue Army leaders delivered statues all around Africa, and to Mexico and South America, preparing for a simultaneous crowning of these statues on May 13, 1971, 25th anniversary of the coronation of Our Lady at Fatima by a legate of Pope Pius XII as *Queen of the World.*

