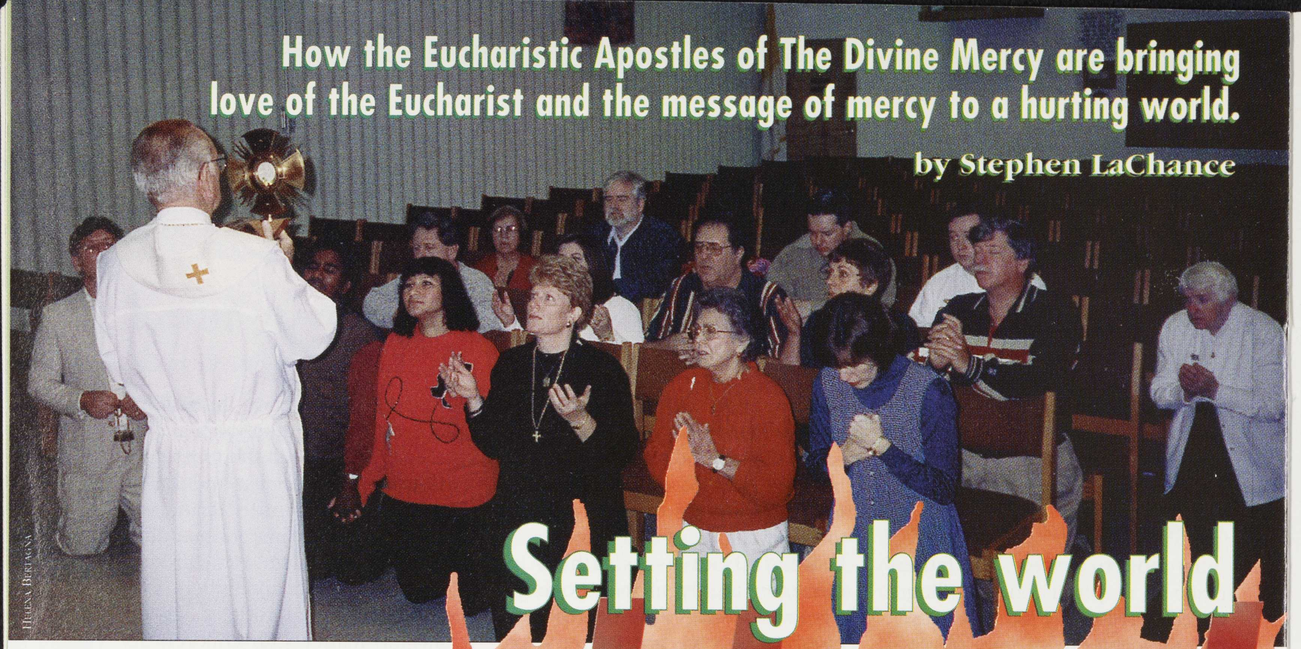
How the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy are bringing love of the Eucharist and the message of mercy to a hurting world.

by Stephen LaChance



HELENA BERTAGNA

Setting the world ablaze!

"One of my favorite scriptures is where Jesus says, 'I have come to cast fire on the earth, and I wish that it were already blazing' " (Lk 12:49), says Bryan Thatcher, MD. "I like to think that our prayer groups can be used for some of the kindling," he adds, summarizing his hopes for the outreach ministry he has founded, the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM).

Sparking the fire

A spark of this fire has touched the life of Teresa — a member of the prayer group in Tampa, FL — and her ex-husband Bernard. Anger and bitterness persisted from their divorce 18 years ago. He had blamed God for the split and had left the Church.

After a few months of attending the prayer group, she heard that he was dying. She knew that they had to be reconciled to each other, and he to God. She called Bernard and asked if she could visit. He assented. With their daughter present, they asked each other for forgiveness and made their peace.

The next day, for the first time in 18 years, he confessed his sins to a priest, received Holy Communion, and was anointed. Within a week he died. This act of mercy and forgiveness epitomizes the purpose of the ministry.

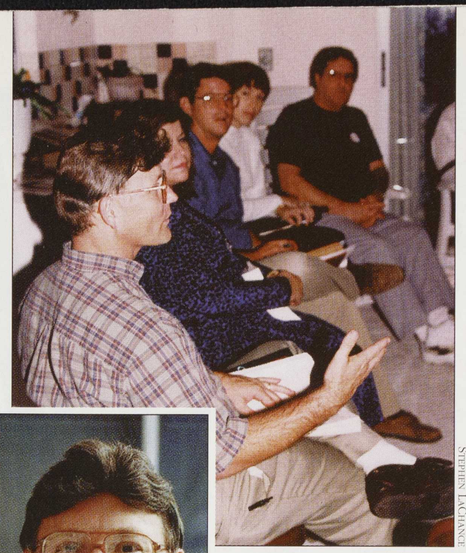
The ministry, which started in Tampa, FL, in 1996, now has three groups active in the United States and over 20 in other countries.

Singer and songwriter Annie Karto — a member of the prayer cenacle in Tampa, FL — brings joy to nursing home residents through her gift of song.

STEPHEN LACHANCE

Bringing Christ to a hurting world

The goal of EADM is to bring Christ to people who are hurting. Besides the focus on spreading mercy, EADM proclaims the truth of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. This is to make people aware of the infinitely precious and powerful gift which Jesus has given us. Accordingly, the group promotes Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.



STEPHEN LACHANCE

HELENA BERTAGNA

Leading a prayer cenacle in Tampa, FL, is Bryan Thatcher, founder of the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy.

An urgent goal is for members to pray the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy for the intention of the dying during Adoration. Jesus told Blessed Faustina that He would stand between the Father and the dying person, "not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior."

Finally, the group brings Christ to the world through corporal and spiritual works of mercy, emphasizing the sanctity of human life — especially to the sick, the rejected, the lonely, the disabled, and the elderly.

To strengthen each other in this service, each group meets weekly to pray and grow in knowledge of the Catholic faith. To this end, they regularly study Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* as well as the *Diary of Blessed Sister M. Faustina Kowalska.*

The *Cenacle Formation Manual and Prayer Book* provides a program of study that the prayer group or cenacle follows each week. It also contains a variety of articles on Eucharistic miracles and essays on the virtues of Blessed Faustina.

Living mercy as lay people

All the studying of the Divine Mercy message is pointless, though, unless one actually lives mercy. Therefore, one of the priorities of the groups is to establish one specific work of mercy that the members can engage in together.

When Helena, a member of the Tampa group, was undergoing chemotherapy, she and her husband, Diego, found the group's outreach to be incredible.

"For 10 months, people from the group would come by to cook and help with cleaning. It was amazing," Diego said.

Seeing the potential for good

This exemplifies the strength and resolve that can come from a small group of committed Christians. The potential for good encouraged the council of our province of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception to establish EADM as one of its first lay outreach ministries.

According to Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC — a member of the council — the group fulfills exactly the wishes of Blessed George Matulaitis (1871-1927), the Renovator of the Marians, who foresaw a more active role for well-informed and devout lay people.

"We are to receive the Eucharist and then live the Eucharist," Bryan summed up. "In the Tampa group, we express that in outreach by bringing the Eucharist to people in the local nursing home," he said. "What we are interested in is helping other groups start with a work of mercy like that on the local level."

Such works of mercy — mercy that begins in the home — make the love of Jesus manifest in the world. And it is with this love that the world will one day be set ablaze. ✝

This is the second of two articles on lay outreach ministries that have become apostolates of our province of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception. Anyone interested in forming a group can purchase a "Facilitator's Packet." It contains the *Cenacle Formation Manual and Prayer Book* as well as the *Diary of Blessed Sister M. Faustina Kowalska,* Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Rich in Mercy,* and a series of teachings on audio tape. For more information call 1-800-462-7426.

Life FOUNDATION
PRAYING TO END ABORTION

More information on the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy is available at free presentations offered by Life Foundation.

Life Foundation encourages involvement in the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy as a way to maintain the zeal which many experience through the presentation on the Shroud of Turin, the Divine Mercy image, and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Listed below are regions Life Foundation will be visiting.

Spring 1999
MidAtlantic and Southeast

Summer 1999
West, Northwest, and Great Lakes

Fall 1999
Midwest and Northeast

Call 1-800-462-7426 for up-to-date information. To arrange a free presentation in your parish call 1-877-380-0727.