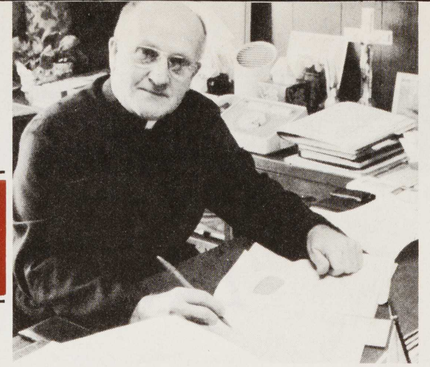
FATHER DIRECTOR WRITES



Dear Marian Helpers:

Summer is now gone on Eden Hill. Fall, which usually is the most beautiful season of the year here in the Berkshires, is with us and Winter will be here before long. We pray it will not be as harsh as the year before. There is a certain beauty in the change of seasons. Even though they come upon us almost unnoticeably, nevertheless they provide many a sobering thought on the continuous flow of life with its joys and sorrows. There is always the consolation — especially in sorrow, sickness or other tribulations that these will not last forever, but a change will come sooner or later.

As you read this letter I will be in Europe. I was given the privilege to act as Chaplain to the special Marian Pilgrimage to Poland where on August 26th — the 600th anniversary celebration of the presence of the miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa at Jasna Gora will take place. While there I promise to present at the feet of Our Lady all the intentions of Marian Associates as well as the deliverance of the Polish people from the oppression of the Communists. We had many nice comments on the last issue of the Bulletin which was dedicated to Our Lady of Czestochowa.

The activities during the summer months at the Marian Helpers Center did not lessen this year a bit. In fact we even hired some students for summer help. This is very encouraging and it could not be so if it weren't for your continuous support.

In the past I have shared with you some of the endeavors of your fellow associates and I now receive so many requests for this that it is impossible for me to include all. I must be more selective and cautious of what I announce, so please do understand my situation.

One of our long-time associates and contributors can arrange to forward mini-booklets on the life of the stigmatic priest, Padre Pio. The booklets include prayers for Padre Pio and Cardinal Merry del Val and Jacinta Marto; prayers to the Virgin and the Sacred Heart and capsule Fatima prayers. These are free, especially in quantity for prayer and Marian groups. Write: Better World Press, 255 Shirls Ave., Washington, Pa. 15301.

One of the projects of Marge and Joe Brizek, parents of eleven children, is to repair broken rosaries and send them to India and Brazil. Joe had to quit work in November of 1979 due to leukemia. He has more time for this work and hopes Marian Helpers can collect these broken segments of rosaries including the crucifixes so that he can continue this work and give others a share in the merits gained from this apostolate. Send these to: Joseph Brizek, 23 Vivian Ct., Fair Lawn, N.J. 07410.

You may join the International Rosary March for those persecuted for their faith by writing to: Rosary March, P.O. Box 235, Syracuse, New York 13214.

It is very encouraging to learn of more Catholic radio programs. We ask our associates to help the "As the Spirit Leads" program approved by John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia, Pa. 19103. We also encourage contributions to the T.V. Program conducted by Mother Angelica from Alabama. Send your donations to Eternal Word Television Network, 5817 Old Leeds Road, Birmingham, Ala. 35210.

One of our young priests has a hobby of collecting old fountain pens. He asked me recently to ask our Marian Helpers to send him their old pens, which they want to dispose of. He is the Assistant Superior at the Marian Scholasticate. His name and address is: Rev. Donald Van Alstyne, Marian Scholasticate, 3885 Harewood Rd., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017.

Some of you who followed and enjoyed the articles on the Divine Mercy Devotion by our Father Seraphim Michalenko, M.I.C., the Vice Postulator of the Beatification Cause of Sister Faustina, were disappointed in finding no article in the last issue. Father has been in Rome on special assignment since last fall and his duties there did not allow him time to write. This issue also has no article by him but Father will return in late September and we hope that he will resume his writing as of the new year.

There is continued interest in the Divine Mercy Messages. Many request the "Diary of Sister Faustina" in English. It is still being translated and a book on the life of Sister Faustina is now being written. When ready they will be announced in the Bulletin.

Just as you will be receiving this issue of the Bulletin I will be in Rome for the canonization of Blessed Maximillian Kolbe. I will lead a special Marian Helpers Pilgrimage at that time to Rome, Lourdes and Spain. You can count on my prayers at St. Peter's at the Vatican, at Our Lady's Shrine in Lourdes and at the Miraculous Statue of Our Lady of Montserrat in Barcelona, Spain. I will report on this pilgrimage in the next issue of the Bulletin.

You may be one of those who have already received a box of our exclusive Marian Christmas cards. I beg you to accept them because the funds received from the offerings for these cards go for the education of our students to the priesthood or brotherhood. If you did not receive a box, please write for one, or ask for our full color brochure. We will also have a beautiful Christmas Novena card which I trust you will be able to use. Let us keep "Christ in Christmas".

Since this will be the last issue before Christmas, accept my most heartfelt wishes for a peaceful and a Merry Christmas Season. You can rest assured that your intentions will be included in the novena of Masses in honor of the Infant Jesus of Prague and a novena of Masses during the Christmas Octave. May the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary be your health and protection!

In the love of Jesus and Mary,

Father Joseph MIC

Breathing With Mary

by EDWARD M. CURLEY

The tensions, frustrations and anxieties of the day exact their toll in a restless, tortuous night besieged by insomnia, resulting in little or no relief. Indeed, despite massive doses of sleeping pills tranqualizers and the like, unfortunate victims of the "times" find themselves in a situation not unlike the dog chasing his own tail. The harder they try to sleep, the more frustrated and anxiety-ridden they become. The nights become at one time a macabre extension of the day that has gone and a preparation for the day that is to come.

While devotees of the Rosary know full well the relaxation and peace which comes from its recitation during those long restless nights, there are many others floundering through the nights with an infinite variety of mechanical or chemical aids. Although the Rosary may not immediately appeal to you, it is possible that you may be led to its inner peace by "breathing with Mary." The initiation and continued practice of this exercise will undoubtedly provide a more spiritual and effective aid than that which has been tried.

There are those who use "breathing" techniques as one step in gaining control of their bodily functions. Consider how concentration on breathing helps the student of Yoga. After a series of practices, they develop a capacity for long continued suppression of the respiration, inhaling and exhaling the breath in a particular manner. Their entire aim in such exercise is to gain control over matter by use of their minds. However, without discussing the philosophy of Yoga, their aim and purpose is entirely different than what is being proposed here. By self-concentration they do acquire a certain degree of peace. Breathing with Mary, however, is not done to control one's self. Instead, it directs the mind towards heaven —that is, centers thoughts on God instead of self. This will open the flood-gates of peace and releases the tensions which are keeping you awake. The mind becomes a two way gate allowing tensions to escape and God's peace to enter.

The Hail Mary is an excellent catalyst for such a two way flow. It is basically a gospel-inspired prayer, having as its author God Himself and describing a profound mystery — the incarnation. The words, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" are words spoken by the angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary. *(Lk. 1:42)* The next few words, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus" is the salutation uttered by Mary's cousin Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *(Lk. 1:42)* The last part of the Hail Mary was added by the Church in 431 A.D. at the Council of Ephesus, which defined Mary's role as the Mother of God.

Outside of the Mass, what more beautiful way can peace of mind be obtained than using a body responding to God's natural laws joined with an intellectual assent to return to God His own words as contained in the Gospels and through the Church He established on earth? During a vocal recitation of the Hail Mary the mind is aware of what the words mean but the breathing is so automatic that no thought at all is given to that, without which life could not normally be sustained. To breathe with Mary requires a relaxed conscious awareness of the raising and lowering of the diaphragm. While the chest rises it represents our prayer ascending to God and as it lowers we invite Him into our hearts.

The Hail Mary is eminently suitable as a prayer of relaxation. With the words which make up this wonderful prayer, our minds are freed from the necessity of forming thoughts or words seeking God's assistance. No one could construct a prayer more appealing to Him than one whose words God, Himself, ordained. Whatever thoughts we may conjure up would fall far short of the excellence of that divinely inspired Hail Mary. Indeed, the tensions which have already been generated by the tossing and turning and ever mounting frustrations would do nothing else but impede the prayers formed by our minds. Thus, the words of the Hail Mary, once committed to memory, act as a sedative for the troubled mind.

A simple technique for the combination of the natural rhythm of breathing with this prayer is to lie quietly, while you become aware of your inhaling and exhaling. Then, as you breathe in, think for a moment that you are inviting God into your heart, there to rest for the night with you. With the exhaling, think only of the worries, tensions and frustration of your sleepless night and how they are fleeing your body and mind to make way for the peace of Christ. In some respects, this is like the old deep breathing technique in which we said, "Out goes the bad air, in comes the good."

After a few seconds of such thoughts, begin breathing with Mary by forming its words in your mind as you breathe in and out. You have thus invited God into your heart and allowed the prayer to replace all those other useless thoughts that have been plaguing you. If those latter thoughts interrupt this activity, it may be necessary to once invite God into your heart and continue as before. It is most if not impossible, to avoid distractions; but being aware of chest rising and falling and uniting it with the Hail Mary is a way of closing the gate on the outside world, leaving you with God, His blessed Mother and true peace.■