

SLAVES OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Saint Benedict Center Monastery
Post Office Box 627
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Saint Ignatius of Antioch; February 1, 2007

To Our Readers:

Laudetur Iesus Christus! The intention of the present letter is to give a brief overview of the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our work and our goals, our community and our spirit. I begin with a description of our purpose:

Founded by Father Leonard Feeney, the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary are a Congregation of religious brothers and sisters dedicated to a two-fold Crusade (or mission): the propagation and defense of Catholic dogma — especially *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* — and the conversion of America to the one, true Church. Our congregation consists of First Order Brothers and Second Order Sisters dedicated by a special vow to furthering these goals. Members of both Orders work out their salvation by living the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience under the Augustinian Rule and living a common life of prayer, work, and study. We also have Third Order members, mostly lay people not bound by vows, who are joined to the congregation by simple promises. Members of all three Orders live the total Consecration to Jesus through Mary according to the spirituality of St. Louis Marie de Montfort.

As religious, our first work is practicing the virtue of religion by living the consecrated life of the evangelical counsels. The religious life itself is a means of achieving our twofold purpose. As our community is apostolic, the interior life of the individual religious and the common life of the community, besides being means of sanctification for the members, are also the spiritual wellsprings fructifying our various active works, which will be explained shortly.

Members: There are four professed brothers and six professed sisters in the monastery and convent respectively. The sisters currently have four postulants in formation for the religious life, while the brothers have one. Besides religious, we have about 300 tertiaries involved in our work across the country. While we have no priests in the community at present, we benefit every day from the services of a very dear, retired diocesan priest, Father Michael Jarecki, who has been with us for about twenty years. At 88 years of age, this heroic *Alter Christus* is being blinded by macular degeneration, and suffers from multiplex other physical infirmities, but he is most gladly spending and being spent for our souls. (See the tribute to Father Jarecki in our [Mancipia No 36](#)) Another priest, whose services are needed elsewhere seven days a week, comes to offer one Mass on Sundays.

Our Superior, Brother Francis, was one of Father Feeney's earliest collaborators. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Michigan and taught under the

Jesuits at Boston College and Holy Cross College. Born in Lebanon as a citizen of the Ottoman Empire during the pontificate of St. Pius X, he is now 93 years old. In his prime, he was known for such mental athleticism as having memorized the four Gospels in their entirety (Matthew, Luke, and John in Latin; Mark in Greek), and being able to recite the complete list of the popes from memory. He cultivated a *habitus* of deep reflection on philosophy and the mysteries of the faith which he translated into an inspiring pedagogical method. Thankfully, this venerable elder has retained his mental faculties in his old age, and we still benefit from his wisdom.

The external works of our community fall into the following areas, which I will use to organize the rest of this presentation:

- ◆ Education / Youth Formation.
- ◆ Publishing.
- ◆ Formation of lay (Third Order) Apostles.
- ◆ Missionary work via the public dissemination of our publications and sacramentals.
- ◆ Fostering Catholic Community life.

Education / Youth Formation: Our religious run [Immaculate Heart of Mary School](#), a first to twelfth-grade private school which operates with the approval of the State of New Hampshire. Attendance averages 35-40 students a year.

Besides the school, we sponsor numerous activities which constitute education in a broader sense. For example, we have about twenty altar boys whom the brothers have instructed in serving (High Mass and Low Mass, as well as Benediction).

Part of our educational work is the annual [Conference](#) we organize. This national symposium on Catholic doctrine, spirituality, evangelism, and social teaching brings together clergy and laymen from all walks of life to extend our Order's mission. [Last year's conference](#) featured, among others, Rev. Nicholas Gruner, S.T.L., S.T.D. (Cand.), renowned Fatima scholar, Mr. Gary Potter (Catholic historian and journalist), Dr. Robert Hickson (Retired Professor, Joint Special Operations University, U. S. Special Operations Command; Retired Professor, U.S. Air Force Academy; Former Green Beret), Mr. C. Joseph Doyle (Director of the Massachusetts Catholic Action League), and Mr. Joseph Kung (President of the Cardinal Kung Foundation). In addition to the St. Benedict Center Conference, our religious and tertiaries occasionally speak at various local conferences across the nation.

For several years, I gave a series of spiritual conferences for youth, aimed at walking them through the thirty-three day preparation for the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary, according to the method of St. Louis de Montfort. Dozens of youth have made the consecration in our chapel over these years. A year ago, I gave a series of seven conferences on vocations and states in life (due in part to our efforts, one young man is entering a Franciscan community and two of those in the class were recently married, the young man having been satisfied by the conferences that this was his state in life).

There are prospects that, in the near future, we will see the modest beginnings of our work in higher education, at the college level.

Publishing: We publish *From the Husetops*, a quarterly journal of seventy-two pages. With articles on the lives of the saints, apologetics, solid Marian studies, Church History, trivia, and the spiritual life, the journal is designed to enlighten the mind with sound doctrine and move the will by the examples of the saints and other Catholic heroes.

In addition to the magazine, we publish a monthly newsletter, *Mancipia*, that reaches many thousands of Americans. Besides having a communiqué from me (“The Prior’s Column,” usually relating a saint or mystery of the month to some concrete aspect of daily life or doctrine), the newsletter features excerpts from our founders’ writings (Father Feeney, Sister Catherine, and Brother Francis), community news, a report from our editor, calendar notes, and other miscellany.

In the last thirteen years, we have published five books, either ourselves or by arrangement with another publisher. These include the works of *Brother Francis*, who has four published titles to his name (two works on philosophy, one collection of poetry, and a book of meditations). Other works of Brother Francis will, God willing, be published as the editing work progresses.

We also have a *catalog* of hundreds of audio tapes, video tapes, and CDs we produce and distribute. These include years’ worth of Brother Francis’ lectures on philosophy, Scripture, theology, and history, as well as various spiritual talks and lectures from our conferences.

Our main web site (www.catholicism.org) features hundreds of articles on the faith, as well as several e-books. Our fromthetopstops.com site distributes our books and books by other publishers, while our sai-cs.com site promotes the tape and study apostolate of the Saint Augustine Institute.

Formation of lay (Third Order) Apostles. While there would be considerable overlapping between this category and that of education, one distinct aspect of our Third Order is the organizing of local study circles. Several such groups exist around the country, where our tapes and study syllabus are used as a method of instruction and formation. Our Tertiaries make the Marian Consecration, wear the Brown Scapular, and must recite the Rosary daily.

Missionary work via the dissemination of our publications and sacramentals: This apostolate, known as “bookselling,” takes us all over the U.S. (especially New England) distributing our *Husetops*, Catechisms, Rosary pamphlets, Rosaries, Miraculous Medals, and other such items door-to-door. Since the late 1950’s, the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary have met hundreds of thousands of people this way, introducing them to the Catholic faith, urging them to return to the sacraments, or encouraging them to a life of greater devotion.

Here is a recent example of the worth of this work. Our sisters — who are quite absorbed in the running of our school — took advantage of the winter vacation to go out every day, two by two, in order to booksell.

In one week they distributed more than 600 books (in English, Spanish, and Chinese), several hundred Rosaries, approximately 1000 Miraculous Medals, and about 1000 “How to Say the Rosary” pamphlets.

One of our staff members received a phone call while the sisters were out. He summarized it in an email to the sisters:

I received a wonderful call from a gentleman today. . . . Apparently, two of our sisters met him bookselling yesterday and gave him some literature and sacramentals. He said he had been praying for a sign (enter the sisters the day after his prayer) regarding what to do with his life spiritually, as he had been adrift on an ‘oarless’ boat jumping from church to church (Mormons, Baptists, etc). He called to express his thanks to those sisters who helped to set his life back on track and to tell us that he was going to return to the Catholic Faith . . .

Stories like this are legion.

Another form of missionary work we have recently taken up is a weekly visitation by one of our brothers and a lay companion to a local retirement home, where they talk with the elderly shut-ins, give out sacramentals, and encourage them in the life of grace. Conversions have resulted from this, one of them, a deathbed conversion.

Fostering Catholic Community life: Most of the faithful who attend our chapel moved to this rural area to be near our Center. These are traditional faithful whose ideal is living a vibrant Catholic life unaffected by the corruption of the larger society of which we are a part. Aware that the City of God “sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly” in the City of the World, they strive to make the faith the center of their lives and maintain traditional Catholic standards in public, private, and professional life, while not being “escapists.”

Our chapel has over 200 regular attendees for Sunday Mass, as well as about 60 for daily Mass. Most of these are young people, as the families who come here, mindful of the proper use of marriage, tend to be large. The children in the community tend to stay in the area as they reach majority age, which bodes well for the future of our local apostolate.

Social life for these families tends to focus around our Center. We have a brunch every Sunday, which provides an atmosphere for them to share the joys of life. Occasional recitals, shows, and skit nights in our hall help foster a wholesome *esprit de corps*. An annual summer music festival, [The Richmond Blueberry Fiddle Festival](#), doubles as a school fund-raiser for IHM School and a major cultural event for our small rural town.

Two other local works are especially deserving of mention: The St. Joseph's Men's League is a group of the men in the community who meet for a monthly spiritual talk on manly virtue and do good works in the community (e.g., chopping and stacking wood, or other odd jobs, for their elderly or disabled neighbors). The St. Hubert's Club is a hunting club for boys and men.

Many of the lectures and spiritual conferences mentioned above were given in the context of this "community-building" facet of our work. Through these talks, we seek to deepen their spirituality using the solid spiritual doctrine of St. Louis Marie de Montfort, St. Francis de Sales, Blessed Columba Marmion, Abbot Guéranger and other approved masters of the spiritual life. We strive to instill in them a fervor for the "universal call to sanctity," something very dear to the heart of Father Feeney.

This concludes a brief rundown on our apostolates. In closing, I would like to pledge our undying fidelity to the perennial and living magisterium of the Catholic Church, the one true Church of Jesus Christ!

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Br. André Marie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brother André Marie, M.I.C.M.
Prior, Saint Benedict Center Monastery