



Dear Family,

In this **Year of Consecrated Life**, Pope Francis has asked us to be witnesses of communion, of joy, and the Gospel. When we see someone with a joyful spirit, it lifts us up spiritually and also attracts us to them. We wonder, "What is it that makes them so happy?" As a young sister, I always admired our Mother Vicar, Sr. Raphael. Life in a contemplative monastery with its daily routine of prayer, work, and recreation, may seem monotonous to some people, yet after many years in religious life, she was cheerful, young at heart and expressed a **Joie de vivre!** Sister was a loyal friend and support to Mother Angelica for many years, but she was also a singer, writer, poet, and artist in her own right. As I was going through some of her writings, the reason for her joy was clearly perceptible. She had found the Love she had longed for. Writing about the gift of our vocation, she said:

*Jesus may invite us, plead with us, hound us, and continually call, but there comes a moment when He steps back and waits for us to choose and reply. There comes a time when we know that the calling will end if we do not decide to follow this path to Him.*

*I remember the awesomeness of my own experience when I wondered how I could live without that longing, whispering, persistent Voice that called to me in the night. I couldn't imagine an existence without Him. I couldn't bear to think that I might not fulfill my destiny, that I might never know what God's plan for me was, what I was meant to be. I kept hearing the last line of a poem, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'It might have been'".*

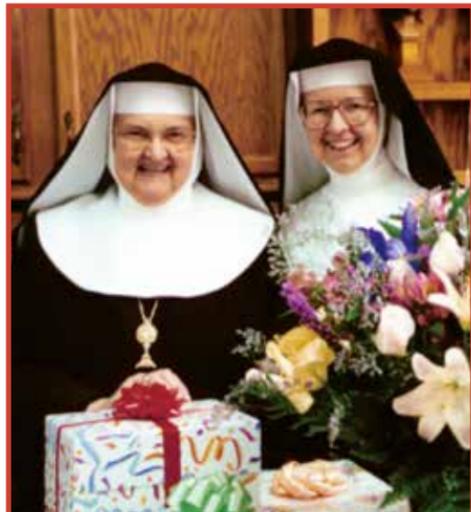
She wrote a beautiful note to one of the sisters who was taking her Solemn Vows:

Dear Sister,

*Jesus is at the door knocking. Through the years you have heard His call- "Come higher, leave all to Me. I would be your Only Love." Now He waits breathless as you come forward and offer Him all that you are, all that He has molded you into by the living of your Cloistered Life and your faithfulness to Him. You have seen Him in all of us and have reached out to us with your laughter, your love for life and music. But most of all, you have reached us by your faithfulness to the life He has called you to embrace. The example of youth dedicated to Jesus is a powerful witness and though you may not know it, your witness gives courage to us who have traveled longer and see the path still steeper before us. Youth and joy and cheerfulness bring life into a Community and your beautiful spirit brings us all a lighter heart and quicker step.*

*What a tremendous blessing to be called to live in His House all the days of our lives, to join the ranks of Saints who have walked this way before us, who from the time of St. Clare and her sister, Agnes, have trod similar cloistered halls and gardens and arched passageways. Other saints before us have made cloistered walks ring with joy and gardens grow more beautiful by the prayers that have been whispered among the flowers and trees.*

*The living of our life and the tremendous gift of a superior like Mother M. Angelica, are treasures to be savored and appreciated. We walk this way but once. Let us spread all the joy and contagious laughter and love for Jesus that our time on earth allows us. We indeed have Heaven here on earth. May we long enjoy it together! My love and prayers are with you, dear Sister.*



We invite you to join us for a series of healing Masses, evening healing services, and candlelight processions at the **Lourdes Grotto**, on the grounds of the Shrine. For dates and times, visit: [www.olamshrine.com](http://www.olamshrine.com)



## Mother's Corner

*"It is in our souls that God does His most magnificent work. The world may look upon the aged, the sick, and the retarded with sympathy, but God's work in their souls, through the power of interior suffering, is doing greater work than when He created the Universe. Only in eternity shall we see the beauty of the soul and only then shall we realize what great things were accomplished by interior suffering."*

### Mother Update - "Loving Immolation"

Right around Christmas, Mother Angelica's pulse rose very high, causing us concern. But a day or two later, it went back to its normal range. Perhaps Mother was just excited over the Birth of Jesus.

As most of you know prior to her stroke in 2001, Mother Angelica had fallen and broken her arm. While she was waiting in the Emergency Room at the hospital for the doctor to come in and x-ray her arm, she said to those of us with her, "I never asked for suffering, but if God sends it, I won't refuse it." Mother seemed to sense that she would not only suffer the pain of her broken arm, but even more. We believe she foresaw something the rest of us could not see, and perhaps Our Lord was calling on her to suffer with Him for souls, or some special cause. God's ways are mysterious. A week or so later, she suffered her debilitating stroke, and Mother indeed accepted her suffering. Mother once wrote, "If He, as God-Man had to 'suffer in order to enter into His Glory,' then we too must suffer in order to prepare ourselves for *our* glory." Suffering is the greatest form of love and Mother Angelica's many years of "loving immolation" in union with Jesus on the Cross benefits all her spiritual children and will win for her a great crown of glory.

We appreciate all the beautiful testimonial letters you send to Mother thanking her for the spiritual help she has given you through her programs and the Network. God love you!



## The Choice

by Sr. Mary Raphael, PCPA

Backward, turn backward, O Time in thy flight.  
Make me a child again, just for tonight.  
Oft' I had pondered in wide-eyed amaze  
All that creation exposed to my gaze.

Thought in my childishness 'twas all for me.  
Wondered Whoever it's Maker might be.  
All of it whispered, " 'Tis Love's mighty goal ~  
All of it's destined to capture your soul.

Oft' would I fling my arms wide to embrace  
Afterwards weeping, "Lord, show me Thy Face!"  
Dreams are for childhood, yet as I grew,  
Tireless I longed for a heart that was true.

Deep down within me I knew there must be  
Someone who cared and belonged just to me.  
Easily could I His virtues extol  
Once I had found Him I'd give Him my soul.

Gentle and tender, my heart He would woo.  
Firm and unbending, yet kind to me too.  
Serious, joyful, patient, and meek,  
Always forgiveness I'd find when I seek.

Who could have guessed it? How can it be?  
Mystery of mysteries ~ One Love ~ yet Three.

In honor of Sr. Raphael's 15th Anniversary of death, we will be reprinting her book, **"My Life With Mother Angelica"**. This book will be available for purchase in the summer.



Picture drawn by Sr. M. Raphael

## St. Joseph Novena

March 11-19

*O good father St. Joseph! To you do I raise my heart and hands to implore your powerful intercession. By all your sufferings, sorrows, and joys, obtain for me from the kind Heart of Jesus the help and graces necessary for my spiritual and temporal welfare. I ask particularly for the grace of a happy death, and the special favor I now implore...*



Please join us and send in your petitions!  
3222 County Road 548 Hanceville, AL 35077

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