



The Serra Club of Arlington
Minutes for Tuesday 07 September 2021 Luncheon Meeting
The Portofino Restaurant | Arlington, Virginia



GUEST SPEAKER

Father Jim McCormack, MIC, STL was ordained to the priesthood on July 10, 2010 at his home parish of Saint Patrick in Burlington, Connecticut. Father offered his first Holy Mass of Thanksgiving the following day at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy on Eden Hill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Growing up in Connecticut, Father's family was nominally Catholic. As a young man, Father Jim excelled in his studies, earning his Bachelors degree in electrical engineering from Yale University and his Master's degree at Stanford University. During college and graduate school, he became more deeply attracted to the faith by the Rosary, sacred polyphony, and the devotion of fellow students at Stanford who were involved with Opus Dei. Following graduate school, Father worked for seven years in Denver, Colorado designing microprocessors for Hewlett-Packard.

As a young professional, Father made his first Marian Consecration on September 8, 2001 – one month before breaking up with his fiancée at the time. During Holy Week of 2002, he made a pilgrimage to Rome, taking a side-trip to visit the Holy House of Loretto. There he experienced a powerful vision of Our Lady of Grace as he prayed the Rosary. It was that experience, understanding that Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady were closer to us than we could ever imagine that Father Jim began his search for a Marian focused religious order.

Thanks to assistance from Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM. Cap., Father Jim met Father Timothy Gallagher, OMV of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. After a year of formation with fellow postulant Father Michael E. Gaitley, MIC were told that they needed to seek another congregation. It was during this difficult time of discernment that they discovered the Congregation of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Founded in Poland in 1670 by St. Stanislaus Papczynski, the Marian Congregation has well over 500 priests and brothers in countries worldwide. The Congregation is unique in that it has not only a founder, but also what the Marians call a "Renovator" – Lithuanian-born Blessed George Matulaitis. This brave bishop is credited with saving the Marian Congregation from annihilation when he renovated and refounded it in 1910. Prior to the Renovation, the congregation had been reduced to one member, due to relentless persecution by Russian authorities.

This small congregation grew in the United States under the efforts of Reverend Father Joseph Jarzebowski, MIC (1897-1964), who brought the Diary of Saint Faustina out of Poland. After a harrowing journey across central Europe, Russia, and Japan, Father Jarzebowski gave a retreat to the Franciscans in Nagasaki. Arriving in Seattle in May 1941, seven months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Father made his way to Washington, DC, and to his fellow Marians in western Massachusetts, where there was a large community of Polish expatriates. The Marians currently number approximately 90 priests and brothers in the United States.

Father Jim explained in more detail about how the image came to exist. There is a strong connection to the icon image of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate in Vilnius, celebrated on February 22, 1931 when work with the artist Eugene Kazimirowski image first began. That date was also celebrated as the "Feast of the Holy Icons" commemorating the triumph over the iconoclasts throughout the whole world.

The artist made more than twelve attempts before Saint Faustina finally accepted his rendition of the image. On April 25, 1935, Blessed Michael Sopocko, SJ (Saint Faustina's confessor) preached the first

celebration of the Divine Mercy Sunday with the image present. Saint Faustina was chosen to decorate the image for this first celebration; but the sisters in her convent did not know of her connection to the image. Our Lord told Saint Faustina that the image would help draw demons out of many hearts; and it would become a vessel that brings graces that the Lord wanted to give to souls.

Father Jim provided several more fascinating facts about this particular “Vilnius Image” – the only one painted under the direction of Saint Faustina.

- Jesus comes forward from the darkness of the sin of the world and walks to bless us and to meet us first. He wears the habit of the high priest, with his hand raised in blessing while the saving graces of blood (red rays) and water (pale rays) emanate from His Sacred Heart.
- Recent comparisons of the face painted in the Vilnius Image align with the image of the face on the Shroud of Turin. Point-by-point comparisons of the facial features, including the eyes, facial structure, nose, and mouth seem to correspond perfectly to those same features of the Shroud.
- During the early days of the pandemic, EWTN promoted placement of the Divine Mercy Image on the front doors and windows of one’s residence. This harkens back to the Old Testament and the Passover, as well as to the protection of Our Lady of the Dawn Gate that the Lithuanian people held dear. Above all, the image reminds us to pray and to trust in the Divine plan for our lives.