

Our Lady Chooses The U. S. For A Final Plea

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Growing numbers of Americans are looking with horror at what has become of our Church and country. Moral confusion and indifference to human life is common. Legal boundaries continue to be stretched to favor abortion, same-sex marriage and pornography without limits. Finally, the Church seems to be rotting from within from a massive problem of homosexuality among the clergy, including bishops and cardinals, as reports surface of a number of homosexual bishops preying on seminarians.

But we must take heart. Societies have broken down before and caused great human misery — but help did come. In times past, Our Lord sent His Blessed Mother to rescue His people in the midst of similar evil and suffering.

In fact, our times bear similarities to the Mexico of 500 years ago, a time when human life was also vulnerable to the powers of the state. In that case, it was the Aztec rulers who were brutally sacrificing hundreds of thousands of human beings on pagan altars. Then, in 1531, God sent Mary to a humble peasant, Juan Diego, and through this now canonized saint offered to an entire country the Christian message of peace and hope. In just 20 short years, nine million Aztec pagans were converted to Christianity by people's obedience to the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In that famous and beloved apparition, Mary appeared as Our Lady of Guadalupe, also known as Our Lady of the Americas, to signify her motherly care over all the countries of the western hemisphere.

Five centuries later, many people believe that Our Lady appeared again under a similar title, [Our Lady of America](#), to signify her care over our specific country, the United States of America.

This series of apparitions began in 1956 in Indiana and continued over three decades into the 1980s. They earned the approval of the local bishops. However, today, few Americans are aware of these appearances of Mary, who identified herself under a new title Our Lady of America. Perhaps people believe that they can solve today's problems without extraordinary help from God.

In any case, when Mary began appearing to a quiet nun in Indiana, religious devotion was common in the U.S., and the legal system largely respected faith institutions and their constitutionally protected role under the First Amendment. But a troubled future was rapidly approaching — if we only knew. Today, we appreciate the prophetic quality of her message, as Mary reached out like a good mother with

warnings for our country's future, warnings which clearly fit our confused and troubled 21st century.

Our Lady's appearances were made to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil (1916-2000) while she was living in Rome City, Indiana and later, in Fostoria, Ohio. Our Lady told Sister Mildred that troubling times were ahead, specifically for the United States of America. Yet Mary also held out encouragement and hope — that, yes, America can be reformed and many lives will be saved if people will turn to God and turn away from sin, especially sins of sexual impurity.

You may well be asking: since there have been so many bogus and unconfirmed apparitions — why believe in this one?

Most important of all, this apparition earned the support and approval of Paul F. Leibold auxiliary bishop of Cincinnati, who gave the imprimatur to the messages of Our Lady of America first in 1960 and later in 1971 when he was Archbishop of Cincinnati. As Archbishop of Cincinnati he also commissioned a statue and a devotional medal. In 2007 Archbishop Leibold's action received the support and encouragement of Cardinal Raymond Burke, at the time Archbishop of St. Louis. [In a letter](#) to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops dated May 31, 2007 he wrote this about devotion to Our Lady of America:

What can be concluded canonically is that the devotion was both approved by Archbishop Leibold and, what is more, actively promoted by him. In addition, over the years, other bishops have approved the devotion and have participated in public devotion to the Mother of God under the title of Our Lady of America (*italics added*).

At the United States Bishop's Conference on Nov.15, 2006 Archbishop Burke publicly displayed and blessed [a new statue](#) of Our Lady of America.

Today, there are those who point out that the apparition of Our Lady of America had not reached the final stages of official Church approval before the death of Archbishop Leibold in 1972. This caution certainly cannot be criticized. No Catholic is forced to believe in apparitions (even those with full approval) and it is fully understandable that many Catholics will not listen to any Marian message until the Pope has given full "canonical approval."

Still, if one weighs the credibility of these purported apparitions to Sr. Mildred, a number of things stand out. First, Sr. Mildred never sought publicity (hunger for the



limelight is a discrediting sign). Second, she submitted Our Lady's messages to her Episcopal superiors and was obedient to their direction. Third, the message itself was granted an imprimatur of a bishop of the Church and was accepted by other bishops. Finally, there is the fact that the message is so clearly in accordance with Holy Scripture, and that it carries a prophetic warning for our times. For all these reasons, isn't it more prudent to believe the message, especially when these predictions have already begun to come true?

Why should the messages of Our Lady of America be taken seriously?

Overall, Our Lady of America's message was twofold. It contained an encouragement of faith but also a warning of terrible times ahead if there was not widespread repentance.

First, Mary revealed to Sister Mildred that this country could be a great source for spreading the true faith across the world. Our Lady said: "I desire, through my children of America, to further the cause of faith and purity among peoples and nations."

At the time, her directive seemed most appropriate, because the United States was experiencing a time of both world tension combined with a deep spiritual devotion to Mary. Yes, the threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union was intense, but faith was intense also, as Catholics were inspired and directed to bombard Heaven with prayer from their homes and parishes. Every Mass concluded with prayers "for the conversion of Russia." In 1950 the pope had declared the doctrine of the Assumption, and the acknowledgment of Our Lady's special role in salvation unleashed a huge wave of devotion in the United States, both among Catholics and secular society. Archbishop Fulton Sheen became one of the country's first "network TV stars," and he dedicated much of his ministry to Mary and wrote many books about her. Father Patrick Peyton launched the Family Rosary Crusade and filled stadiums across the U.S. for his Rosary rallies. He was flanked in many of his public appearances by Hollywood stars that were proud to be identified as Catholics. Pastors nationwide encouraged their parishioners to pray the Rosary every night.

Also, during this time, the American bishops reinforced their proclamation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, as Patroness of the United States. This was first proclaimed at the Council of Baltimore in 1846. The bishops capped this directive by completing and opening the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C.

On September 25, 1956, Sr. Mildred recorded this message from Our Lady: "I am pleased, my child, with the love and honor my children in America give me." Then Our Lady promised to reward their love by working "miracles of grace among them."

But she immediately added: "I do not promise miracles of the body but of the soul."

In other words, Mary's mission was not to work physical healings and to make people happy in this life. By promising miracles of the soul—instead of the body—it's clear that Our Lady's primary goal is to help people change morally so they will be saved.

As at Guadalupe, she showed herself as a most tender mother and invited each of us to turn to her for help.

And, as at Lourdes, Our Lady of America proclaimed one of the great mysteries of our faith, that she is the Immaculate Conception. In fact, Mary, under the title of Our Lady of America, gave her specific approval of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, telling Sr. Mildred, "This is my shrine, my daughter. Tell my children I thank them." Our Lady encouraged the shrine as a pilgrimage site and promised, "It will be a place of wonders."

And, as at Fatima in 1917, she asked Americans to reform their lives, especially in matters of purity and chastity, before it was too late and our nation succumbed to terrible sufferings.

Priests were called to a special role. Mary said American priests should submit to penance and self denial and in this way lead the renewal of the Church in America.

The second part of her message was just as crucial, but more ominous. In subsequent apparitions, Mary's messages became more somber and urgent. "I come to you, children of America, as a last resort . . . Be my army of chaste soldiers ready to fight to death to preserve the purity of your souls."

Our Lady added: "Make the Rosary a family prayer . . . Those found in the circle of my Rosary will never be lost."

Our Lady also spoke sternly about the future of the United States and the world. She spoke specifically about "my children in America." "Unless they do penance by mortification and self-denial and reform their lives, God will visit them with 'punishments as yet unknown.'"

But what could she be talking about?

What Should We Make of the "Punishments"?

Any Christian would be unsettled to hear of "punishments as yet unknown." But what punishments did Mary come to save America from?

If we stop to think about it, the answer clearly involves major trends we know too well: We live in a time of homes without fathers, and sexual relationships without marriages. Deep moral confusion which has destroyed the peace of families and the justice of many of our nation's laws. Every day we hear of new acts of violence. Sexual depravity has become "mainstream." Women and children are the special targets of predators. And though the "Cold War" has ended, we have entered a new era of war waged by terrorists.

So, it isn't as if we aren't already experienced the punishments warned of by the Blessed Mother. Besides the historic changes of legal abortion and same sex marriage (two groundbreaking legal precedents which people in the

1950s couldn't have imagined), we also have the rise of religious persecution in our own country (Remember the government's legal threat against the Little Sisters of The Poor.)

Today, in both Mexico and the U.S., murder routinely begins in the womb and ends in the street. Are we really surprised? After all, just as love and life are mysteriously related, so is hatred and death. When the U.S. Supreme Court opened the door to legal abortions in 1973, in effect, it swung open the door to a world of hatred and death. Recall that, when Mother Teresa of Calcutta received the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) on Dec. 11, 1979 in Oslo, Norway, she declared: "if a mother can kill her own child, what is left for me to kill you and you to kill me? There is nothing between."

But there is one more type of "punishments as yet unknown" which Our Lady of America says will happen if Americans do not reform their lives: War. Yes, we already experience war in distant countries, but now the reality has come to our own cities. We used to worry about terrorism from the Mideast, and nuclear threats from rogue nations like North Korea. Now we have to worry about bloodbaths in our own hometowns, like San Bernardino, California!

By comparison, the memory of the Cold War arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union almost looks like peacetime. Clearly, our civilization is sinking into depths that, to anyone granted a glimpse of the future in the 1950s, would have seemed like a nightmare.

How Mary's heart must be breaking for us.

A final plea to the United States

Take these troubling examples all together and it's no great stretch to realize we face a world that is growing just as dangerous, brutal and unforgiving as the ancient Aztec culture of 500 years ago. But again, Our Lady has stepped forward to help. Like a good mother, she comes not just to warn us, but to show us the way out of our difficulties.

First, however, Mary issued an apparent "final" warning and correction for her children and this country. She told Sr. Mildred: "Unless the United States accepts and carries out faithfully the mandate given to it by Heaven to lead the world to peace, there will come upon it and all nations a great havoc of war and incredible suffering."

She also added a consoling message: If Americans make a concerted and prayerful effort to reject the secular and evil trends consuming the country, the U.S. can escape the worst of the "incredible suffering" about to fall on the world. Mary also told Sr. Mildred that even if America "fails in the pursuit of peace because the rest of the world will not accept or cooperate, then the United States will not be burdened with the punishment about to fall."

This stern, but absolutely crucial, part of Our Lady of America's message occurred in the 1980s, which has caused some skeptics to discount it (or even shrug off the entire series of apparitions.) By then, Archbishop Leibold had died

and so the later messages were not afforded the same Episcopal scrutiny as those 20 years earlier. Let me repeat: The Church never compels anyone to believe in an apparition. But in the case of these credible apparitions of Mary, as Our Lady of America, to Sr. Mildred, and the fact that so many of Mary's warnings have come true, isn't it more prudent to believe, than not to believe?

Our Lady, ever the good mother, didn't conclude her visits on a note of despair. She announced through Sr. Mildred that God was giving America a special gift — one which she herself relied on in this world — *the protection of St. Joseph*.

Mary said: "My holy spouse has an important part to play in bringing peace to the world."

That's right — the apparition of Our Lady of America has a special role for St Joseph. This great saint, mostly silent throughout history, but so powerful, also appeared to Sr. Mildred. On March 18, 1958, St. Joseph told her that "Fatherhood is from God and it must take once again its rightful place among men." For this to be done fathers must have the moral strength and courage to enter into only holy marriages and accept the responsibility of remaining with their families and training their children especially in Christian doctrine.

If fathers turn to St. Joseph by praying to him and imitating his virtues, like honesty and chastity, they will receive the moral strength and courage to be good fathers. St. Joseph told Sr. Mildred that "Through me the Heavenly Father has blessed all fatherhood, and through me He continues and will continue to do so till the end of time."

All in all, there are many reasons to have hope. In the years since Our Lady of America's stern but supportive apparitions, John Paul II issued his prophetic words that a "springtime in the Church" is underway. Today, we have proof that spring is upon us. The number of young practicing Christians in the United States is growing, if still numerically small. But their faith is pure and very courageous — in other words, they are fit for battle. As it says in 1 Maccabees 3:19: "victory in war does not depend on the size of the army but on the strength that comes from Heaven."

The role of young people in renewing the Church and society is part of the message given to Sr. Mildred. She stated: "Our Lady made it known to me that she is particularly interested in the youth of our nation. It is they who are to be the leaders of this movement of renewal on the face of the earth. Their ranks will be swelled by youths of other nations whom Our Lady also calls to help in the accomplishment of this great renewal."

So, while the message of Our Lady of America is pointed and troubling, it is also worthy of a mother who greatly loves her wayward children: To save ourselves from disaster here and in eternity, all we have to do is return to the fundamental values of faith and family. All we have to do is try.