



## Our Mission

To serve Christ through His Church by praying for priests and others in Church leadership, to be devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and to promote Adoration of Christ in the Eucharist.

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## Harmony

The quality of a religious movement is in its ability to harmonize the many components into a whole that is lifegiving for all. One of the statements made by the pagans about the early Christians was, "See how they love one another!" That statement was not made because Christians agreed in everything because they certainly did not. It was rather an observation that Christians could love one another even when they disagreed. Our knowing how to disagree lovingly is a far greater witness to the world than if we never had cause to disagree.

It is easy to be nice to each other when we are in agreement. But it is not so easy when we disagree. So we are judged far more on our manner of disagreeing than in our areas of agreement. A far greater problem than disagreement is gossip. A good rule for a religious group is to never say behind people's back what we would not say to their face. Gossip can become the poison that destroys the trust the members of a group should have for one another. The greatest help in recruitment any group has is the manner in which the members deal with one another. AND the things we say about one another when we are apart.

Harmony among us is vital if we would be in fact all that we claim to be and thereby to draw others to our lifestyle. Consider a painting. Would it be as beautiful if it were of only one color? Is not its beauty rather in the proper harmonizing of different colors? In the same way, if we all held the same opinion all the time, would we be as inviting to others? Harmony comes in blending different opinions, lifestyles, manners of working, in such a way that others can say, "I could be part of that!"

We all must have some necessary points of union; the Gospel, God, Jesus, reverence to Our Lady. These must always be our rallying points. These are some of the things other must share with us if they want to be part of us. Love what you love with courage and know why you love what you love. Then the variations in the love-dialogue will enrich all of you and never become a matter for diversion.

Love is the blossoming of the heart. All flowers are different but all are beautiful in their own

way and, together, they form a bouquet meant to be a constant offering to the Lord. In a religious group, the more harmony there is, the more sincere love, the greater the chances that the religious group will survive into the future and the greater gift it will be to the Church and to the Lord of the Church.

*Fr. John Guimond, Capuchin*

## "Thank You"

Fr. John Guimond O.F.M. Cap., has been the Spiritual Advisor of the Widows of Prayer of Huntington and Fort Wayne, Indiana since their beginning in 2001. In fact, Fr. John was Spiritual Advisor of the Widows of Prayer at the beginning, which was September 29, 1994, the feast of Sts. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. We had our first meeting and Evening of Recollection, when it was decided that the best way we could serve the Lord would be to pray for His priests and others in Church leadership and for an increase in religious vocations.

The Lord has smiled on our efforts with Communities in seven different locations.

We are sad that Fr. John Guimond has been transferred to the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington, MI. But, we wish him well and know that the people of that area have been truly blessed by his arrival.

Fr. Ron Rieder, O.F.M. Cap., pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul Church in Huntington, Indiana, where Fr. John resided, will assist the Widows of Prayer of that Community. And, we know in our hearts that, with Fr. John's enthusiasm and belief in our work for the Lord, that the next Community of Widows of Prayer will be in the Washington, MI area!

Thanks, Fr. John, for all that you are and all that you have done for the Widows of Prayer. Know that our prayers are with you.

*Mary Reardon wp  
General Servant Leader  
Widows of Prayer*

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## Widows of Prayer are "Brilliant as the Stars"

By: Bernadine Ziemba

On September 5, 2008 the Widows of Prayer once again gathered for their Annual Meeting at the Monte Alverno Retreat and Spirituality Center in Appleton, Wisconsin. What a wonderful experience that was for me. I looked around the room and saw each widow with a peaceful, glowing look on her face. Sometimes you'll see a few ladies in a crowd with a happy expression. This wasn't the case. Each and every widow showed from her expression that something was very special about her inner being. We felt bonded together in this sisterhood of being a Widow of Prayer. We have found peace in our lives through our prayer lives to conquer trauma and tragedy that accompanies the death of a spouse. We are "strong women of today," a phrase my college choir director at Alverno College, Sr. Laudesia, O.S.F. (Sr. Laura Lampe) frequently used. No, many of us are not strong physically, but we have been blessed with Fortitude, one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. I am so grateful for this gift. As with any meeting, there are always points to ponder, discussion to be heard, decisions to be made. I will not go into the details of the meeting.

Rev. John Guimond, OFM, Cap. From Huntington, Indiana was our retreat master. He had another term for what I saw in the women's faces of the Widows of Prayer. He asked us to be "Brilliant as the Stars." He began our silent retreat by looking at ways we can tarnish our halo: Do not become angry, be pure do not bear false witness, and be careful of our social behavior. It is our calling to be free to do service to the Lord. The heart of our ministry is for people to see God shining through us. This was evident in the women making their promises during two liturgies this weekend. Helen Krueger made her Third and Final Promise at Sunday's liturgy. JoAnn Kern and Bernadine Ziemba made their Second Promise, Mary Ann Seidl made her First Promise and Theresa Driessen made her Renewal at Saturday's liturgy. The stars were aglow.

All of Father Guimond's talks were inspirational. In "What is in a Name," he asked us to ponder "Why do we want to be a Widow of Prayer? Why do we do what we do?" We need to ask ourselves what means of sanctification will others gain from us. In his talk entitled "Mary's Daughters," he asked us to listen and hear the invitation of God. He discussed Whispers of the Heart, those thoughts that come right into our heads. This can be a love experience. A heart relationship happens because someone loves us. A healthy relationship with God will enable us to have a healthy relationship with others. Father presented a beautiful explanation of Mary as Queen Mother wearing her crown of stars. She sits at the right hand side of Jesus and shares our many needs with him. This is why we share our needs to her. Mary as Queen Mother and as a Widow of Prayer had an impact on Jesus and the world. Jesus suffered so we could be redeemed. We suffer so others can receive grace. Suffering brings us into God's presence. We were told that as Widows of Prayer we are close to her Son. This is very

comforting. Accepting God's will for us and obeying it are important ways to become closer to Jesus as we follow his pathway to heaven. We are called to friendship and love with the Lord.

It's difficult for me to name a favorite part of the retreat. They are all special in their own unique way. I do treasure the Healing Service and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament that was done on Saturday evening. Sitting in a dimly lit chapel and experiencing the healing presence of the Lord is a very mystifying experience. As I inch closer to the Blessed Sacrament I would love to give it a big hug and feel hugged and loved by Jesus.

At the close of the retreat Mary Reardon once again asked for volunteers to give witness to what Widows of Prayer means to them. I was very moved by what each lady shared. Since I made my Second Promise at this Retreat, I tried to reflect on how I have changed since my First Promise last year. I can honestly say my prayer life has been enhanced and I have a deeper yearning to be closer to the Eucharist. I do not feel I attend Mass because I have to, but because I really want to. I would miss the opportunity to be close to my Lord and Savior. Just as a parent would miss her child if she left him for a day or two, I would miss Jesus if I did not receive him into my heart as often as possible.

At the end of the retreat, women in attendance who are not widows shared that they enjoy being near us. We were told our joyfulness, peacefulness and prayerfulness shines through us, even in our silence. I guess without even being told to be this way, we are "Brilliant as the Stars." Praise the Lord! May he continue to shine in our hearts.



*Above are those who made promises during two liturgies over the weekend. Helen Krueger made her Third and Final Promises during Sunday's liturgy. JoAnn Kern and Bernadine Ziemba made their Second Promises, Mary Ann Seidl made her First Promise and Theresa Driessen made her Renewal at Saturday's liturgy.*

*Left to right: Theresa Driessen wp, Bernadine Ziemba wp, Mary Reardon wp, General Servant Leader, Fr. John Guimond OFM Cap., Mary Ann Seidl wp, Helen Krueger wp, and JoAnn Kern wp.*

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## Quotes from “Widows of Prayer”

*The following are thoughts from some of the Widows of Prayer*

PRAYER — In Matthew 6:6, Jesus tells us: “When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret.” St. Ambrose explains “By ‘room’ you must understand, not a room enclosed by walls that imprison your body, but the room that is within you; the room where you hide your thoughts, where you keep your affections. This room of prayer is always with you, wherever you are, and it is always a secret room, where only God can see you.” How many times during the day do I enter into my inner room, close the door to distractions and enter into dialog with my God, who patiently and lovingly waits for me?

From a treatise by St. Ambrose, bishop

*Our minds are to be anointed by the Spirit through reading the Scriptures, the Inspired Word of God.*

St. John of the Cross

*Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.*

The above were submitted by Germaine Doerfler wp

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*Being a Widow of Prayer means to me a beginning of a whole new life. The closeness of God that I feel, being with these Holy women. The wanting of this same Holiness for me. Being a Widow of Prayer is God completing my life, and hopefully letting the Holy Spirit work through me through the Widows of Prayer.*

Theresa Driessen

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*“God, you are my co-pilot and Jesus, you can ride between us.” This is what I say the minute I get into my car. I’ve been saying this for over 16 years, since my husband passed away. Before that I seldom drove in winter so, when I was left a widow, if I wanted to go anywhere I had to get behind the wheel and just “go”. But now I have people riding with me, even during the winter months.*

*The first place I drive to each day is to our chapel for early Mass. As a matter of fact, the best two hours of my day is spent in front of the tabernacle, at least one half of this time, alone with Jesus. Before joining the Widows of Prayer I didn’t “have the time” or was just “too busy” to spend much time with Jesus all alone in the tabernacle. Now I look forward to each day in order to be in church with Our Savior. Widows of Prayer has increased my prayer life tremendously and I love that.*

Sincerely, Ginny McKenzie wp

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*What it means to me to be a Widow of Prayer — Before I tell you what it means to me to make my final promises as a Widow of Prayer, let me tell you what happened to me when I was walking through the cemetery near Monte Alverno Retreat Center. As I was walking I saw the statue of the Holy Family. I saw a kneeler there so I went up to it. As I approached it I felt a presence. I knelt down, looked down, and right there was Mary Reardon’s husband’s grave. I sensed him talking to me. He said that he was happy that Mary started the Widows of Prayer. He also said that our husbands are with him in heaven.*

*When I started the Widows of Prayer community in Milwaukee (which I learned about when I went down to EWTN) I didn’t know what I was getting into. I knew that I wanted to do something for God. Since being a Widow of Prayer I have learned to pray more, get closer to God, and really appreciate my faith.*

*When I made my third and final promises I felt very emotional because I was dedicating the rest of my life to God, Mary, and His Church. Since being a Widow of Prayer I have learned that our fellow widows are like family, not only my group, but all the other groups I have met.*

Helen Krueger  
Local Servant Leader  
Milwaukee Area

### Who is a Widow of Prayer?

- *She is one of a community of dedicated women, joined together within the Catholic Church, faithful to the Magisterium, with the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus as the center of her life.*
- *She is a daily intercessor for God’s priests and other Church leaders, as well as family and the concerns of the world.*
- *She lives a life of holiness and simplicity as an example to family and all those around her.*
- *She acquires a deepening spirituality thru meeting as a group, books and videos, as well as retreats and other specified times together.*
- *Her gift is bringing Jesus to those she encounters.*
- *She realizes that life doesn’t end with the death of a spouse, but, indeed, can be a new beginning when answering the Call of God!*



## Widows of Prayer

In his first letter to Timothy, Saint Paul describes to the young pastor the unique place of widows in the community of believers. "The real widow, who is all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day" (1 Timothy 5:5). For Paul, God has a special place in his heart for widows, making their prayers valuable in a distinctive way. As the experience of the Huntington's Widows of Prayer suggests, this is still true.

The Widows of Prayer were founded in 1994 by Mary Reardon of Appleton, Wisconsin. Since the group's beginning, it has since spread throughout the Midwest: there are communities in Appleton, Milwaukee, Wind Lake, WI, Huntington, Ft. Wayne, IN, Lake Villa, IL, and Menominee, MI.

The Huntington Widows of Prayer were formed in 2001. Mae Leedy, the local servant leader for the Huntington area, recounts that after giving a series of talks to the parish over several days, Fr. John Guimond invited any widows present to continue to gather together. Mae was one of three ladies who accepted the invitation. There are currently nine Widows of Prayer in Huntington, and one widow in formation.

Widowed women who are interested in the group are invited to participate in group meetings. After a year, they are invited to make a promise to continue for another year as a Widow of Prayer. She is given the Widows of Prayer insignia to wear and may participate in their activities. After a year, a second promise is made; the third and final promise is made after three years.

The life of a Widow of Prayer balances individual spirituality with community life. A Widow is expected to lead a life of prayer, expressed particularly through praying the Rosary daily, adoring the Blessed Sacrament and praying such prayers as suit the Widow's spirituality. The Widow of Prayer is also encouraged to join parishioners in the daily celebration of the Eucharist, or as often as her schedule permits.

The Widows of Prayer meet together weekly under the guidance of their spiritual director, Fr. John Guimond, Group prayer and study accompany time for reflection and sharing.

Once a month, the Huntington group joins the Ft. Wayne group for a shared meeting. The Widows of Prayer also participate in two retreats per year, one in Appleton and one in Huntington.

In member Mae Leedy's experience, the Widows of Prayer offer widowed women a unique way to grow spiritually and to minister to the needs of the Church. "We have been

called to pray for the Church and for the priests, and for an increase in religious vocations.

Not all widows are called to serve the Lord in this particular way, but for those who are called, life as a Widow of Prayer is a continuous source of consolation, growth, and renewal.

*Jon Stotts – Interview with Mae Leedy  
Local Servant Reader  
Huntington, Indiana*

## Holy Reminiscing

In the summer of '02, four widows from Fort Wayne traveled to Huntington IN at the invitation of the Widows of Prayer, to attend their meeting. We were very impressed and after a year of formation made our first promises in July '03. That Fall, Fr. John Guimond, our Spiritual Advisor, strongly encouraged us to begin our own group. After a month of prayer to the Holy Spirit, we "launched out into the deep" and began Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament group in Fort Wayne. Our first meeting was in Jan. '04. We now have 16 insignia-wearing members and several in the discerning process.

In these almost five years Fr. John has traveled from Huntington to Fort Wayne almost every Wed. to teach us Scripture, Franciscan Spirituality and prayer. He has deepened our understanding of and commitment to our vocation as Widows of Prayer. In making the 50 mile round trip each week through all kinds of weather he also taught us fortitude and perseverance.

Another thing he taught us was Holy Reminiscing (looking back on how the Lord has acted in our lives and brought us to where we are and who we are at this moment.) Speaking for myself, because of Fr. John's teachings I have grown in my knowledge and love of Scripture and love for the Blessed Sacrament. If we are faithful to daily prayer and our Holy Hours before the Blessed Sacrament, eventually our hearts will be before the Blessed Sacrament even when we are not.

Recently we said goodbye to Fr. John as he left for his new assignment in Michigan. Though you are no longer with us, Fr. John, the heart remembers and gives thanks to God for so great a gift as you. Your deep knowledge of Scripture and love of the Blessed Sacrament, your ready smile and availability to discuss problems will long be remembered. May this new phase of your life be filled with joy and new blessings.

Shalom, Fr. John.

*Dorothy Ward wp  
Local Servant Leader  
Fort Wayne, Indiana Community*

### To learn more about the Widows of Prayer, call:

Appleton, WI area  
920-733-2652

Lake Villa/Chicago, IL area  
847-265-0411

Fort Wayne, IN area  
260-422-2960

Franklin & Milwaukee, WI area  
414-858-9811

Huntington, IN area  
260-356-0919

Menominee, MI area  
906-864-1972

or E-mail [www.widowsofprayer.org](http://www.widowsofprayer.org)



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## A Morning of Recollection

By: Bernadine Ziemba

On a beautiful morning in May, the Widows of Prayer from the Lake Villa Community in Illinois gathered at Prince of Peach Parish in lake Villa to enjoy a Day of Recollection. The topic was, "Prayer: developing a strong prayer life and deepening our relationship with God." It was the Feast of the Visitation, and people from the neighboring parishes as well as Widows of Prayer from the Milwaukee area journeyed to start their day with Mass, celebrated by Fr. Pawel Komperda, Spiritual Director of the local Widows of Prayer Chapter. The homily was based on Luke's Gospel the Magnificat. What better way could we start our day than by meditating on Mary's prayer?

After Mass, Cecilia Vilorio-Skrzypek, local Servant Leader of the Lake Villa Chapter, gave a brief history of our ministry. She stated we are called to be holy as widows. Our guides to holiness are prayer, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and adoration of Christ in the Eucharist.

### Concept of Prayer

Fr. Pawel began our first session with the prayer that Jesus taught us in Luke 11:1-4, the Our Father. He made reference to Fr. Marek Chmielewski's book, Cast into the Deep." It was written in Polish, but Fr. Pawel stressed its message of how important it is for us to ask ourselves, "Whom do we beseech, God or other idols?" He also made reference to St. Augustine's Confessions. He talked about our restless heart and how we still only find rest in God's heart. We need to empty ourselves and fill ourselves with God and not terror or fear. Pope Benedict XVI in his recent visit to the United States also asked us to be prayerful. Our prayer life should be based on the simple theme, "Thy will be done." This is the message Jesus taught us in the Our Father. This is the message Mary shared with us by responding to God's call, "Let it be done to me according to thy word."

We went on to discuss what prayer is. Prayer is the source of spiritual life. Fr. Pawel explained *Lex orandi, Lex credendi*. The Law of prayer is the Law of faith. The way we pray is the way we believe. Prayer is a source and context of spiritual life. We were asked to meditate on the Jesus Prayer, "Jesus Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a poor sinner." Reference was also made to the prayer of

Bartemaus and Peter. When we offer our entire day to God, it is possible to make our entire life a prayer.

There are many definitions to prayer. St. John Damascene refers to it as a "lifting up of oneself to God." The Catechism of the Catholic Church has an entire chapter defining prayer.

Chapter 4, paragraph 2558 and 2559 tells us that "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God." St. Therese of Lisieux taught us that prayer is lifting up our heart and simply looking at the sky and seeing God's love for us. It is an exclamation of joy and love, especially in our suffering. This is why it is important to pray when we are suffering. St. Teresa of Avila looked upon prayer as a conversation with a friend that you know loves you. When we were young we were taught that prayer is talking to God. That definition hasn't changed. We still need to look at prayer as a conversation with God. As we've grown older we've learned this is how we build a relationship with God, but words need not be spoken in all forms of prayer. St. John Vianney knew prayer could be a look. Prayer becomes a safe place where we find solace. It can be a mystery. Psalm 42:8 tells us prayer is "deep calling unto deep." In Genesis 18:1-3, the three visitors represented images of the Trinity. The Spirit raises our heart in prayer. Prayer is a dialogue or a meeting. It also is listening. In prayer we behold God and meet the Trinity. Our prayer life can become an awesome experience, if we open ourselves up to God's calling.

### Prayer as Meeting with God

Part II of Fr. Pawel's presentation dealt with Prayer as Meeting with God. In prayer we are to be in the presence of God. We always look at God as being with a friend. We are aware of our presence to God. We should have an openness to God's will as we empty ourselves to God. Dialogue with Jesus can be done in stillness, silence or words. God said one word, "Jesus." Sitting in a meditative or contemplative state are forms of prayer we may want to use in our lives. St. John of the Cross meditated on the phrase, "God is love." The words, Jesus, cross and love can put us into a prayerful state of mind. St. Ignatius taught us to evaluate our day in our night prayer by use of The Examen. God speaks to us

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## Will You Help?

The Widows of Prayer are growing in number with satellite communities in neighboring states and diocese. Our financial needs are growing as well.

Are you willing to support a new movement in the Church with your financial help? The Widows of Prayer is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Tax Deductible Charity. Cut off the bottom of this sheet, fill out and send along with your check to: Widows of Prayer, Inc., 1021 W. Windtree Dr., Appleton, WI 54914

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Widows of Prayer Donation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to give: \$100 - \$75 - \$50 - \$25 - \$20 - \$10 - Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Any amount given will be greatly appreciated. Remember the Widows of Prayer in your will.



The above pictures were taken at Prince of Peace Church in Lake Villa, Illinois on October 18 after the 5:00 PM mass in which Cecilia Viloria-Skrzypek made final promises as a Widow of Prayer.

The picture on the left is Cecilia with Fr. Pawel Komperda, the Spiritual Advisor of the Lake Villa Community.



The picture on the right is Fr. Pawel and Cecilia along with visiting members of the Widows of Prayer from the Milwaukee/Franklin area as well as the Appleton area. Left to right: Ann Elmerd wp, Bernadine Ziemba wp, Rita Lindisch wp, Mary Reardon wp, Cecilia Viloria-Skrzypek wp, Ginny Rekosh wp, and Helen Krueger wp. Fr. Pawel kneeling.

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through the lives of the saints. They have shown us God's words in a concrete way or situation. Pope John Paul II wrote the play, "Brother of Our God." It is about the life of Polish artist, St. Albert Chmielowski. We are told "we need to be as good as bread." In our prayer life we are to strive to constantly remain in the triune God and in communion with Him.

### **Need for Prayer**

We need prayer for our recovery of sin and to be in grace. Prayer is a visible sign of our obedience of faith. In our faith we seek understanding. At Baptism we receive the gifts of Faith, Hope and Charity. Prayer perfects these gifts. Referring to Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical on this theme can strengthen our prayer life. At this point of the morning, a question was asked about God's will in disastrous situations. Father said in evil and disastrous situations God's will did not happen. Sin brought disaster and disorder to all people in the world. St. Augustine said that "order is the first rule of heaven." God punishes as a cleansing and for holy awareness. We are to pray that love and mercy will happen. The will of God is love and mercy itself. We accept Mary as the Mirror of Justice in our lives.

### **Effectiveness of Prayer**

It was suggested we read the Book of Job. God chooses some of us to be Christ-like. Prayer is not effective if we do not pray well or if we lack repentance. Sometimes we pray for things that are not good. God grants us what He knows is best for us, as Love and Mercy. We still have out freedom to choose good or evil.

### **Kinds of Prayer**

There are two main categories of prayer: individual and communal (liturgy). Our prayer may take on the form of oral or mental prayer. We petition, give thanks, praise or adore and give reparation to God. Prayer may take on the form of: meditation (what is prayer telling me?); reflection;

or contemplation (infused knowledge). Using Lectio Divina to enhance our prayer life was also discussed. Fr. Pawel referred once again to the Our Father. In it we pray for seven different things. Three of which are for God and four are for us.

### **Environment of Prayer**

In Father's concluding remarks he mentioned how important a proper environment for our prayer time is. We need a quiet place, an allotted amount of time that fits into our schedule and a reverent posture. We need to resolve to be a person of prayer. When we begin our journey of prayer, we should start with a small amount of time and increase our time when possible. We should just pray. The best school of prayer is prayer itself. Mary was the best school of prayer. We have recourse to her as a model of prayer. There are three stages of Spiritual Life: purgation (cleansing), illumination, and union with God through the sacraments. Even though we do not treat saints as God, we do petition them and ask for their intercession to God. We look to them as holy people, who through their example can lead us to a closer relationship with God. A fitting closing to this Day of Recollection was collectively praying the Angelus, with Fr. Pawel as our leader.

