

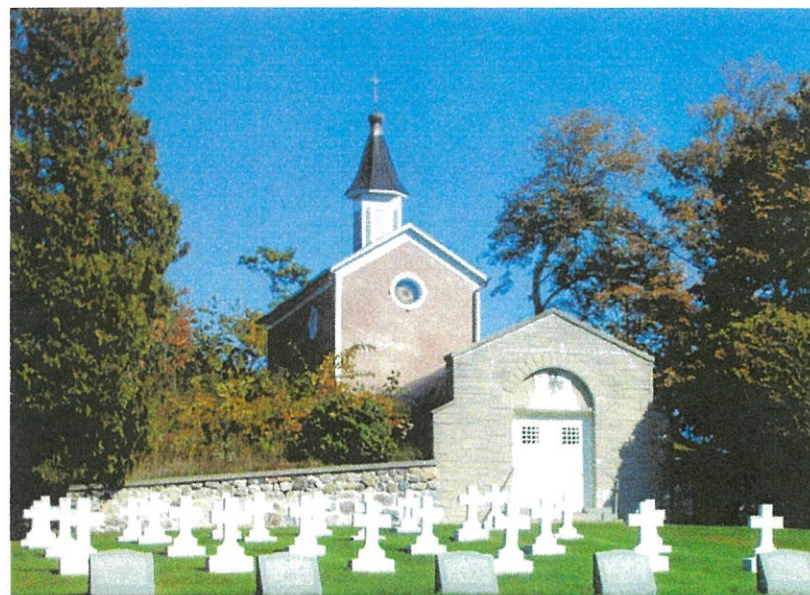


Original statue of Our Lady of Loretto brought to Loretto Hill by Fr. Ambrose Oswald in 1854.

Thousands of pilgrims joined their hands in prayer before this statue. Two hands carried it off in 1987. A replica now stands in its place.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Loretto on Loretto Hill

St. Nazianz, Wisconsin

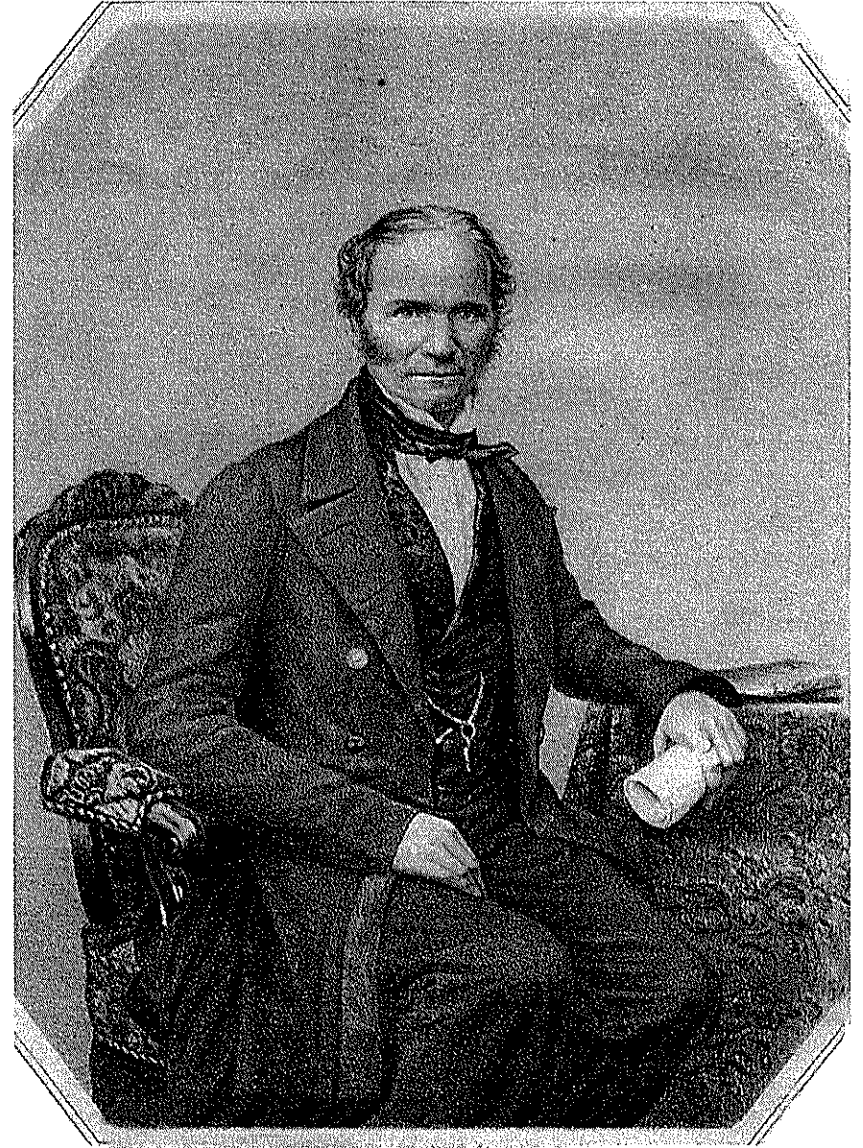


The Loretto Chapel on Loretto Hill. In the foreground, the mausoleum of Father Ambrose Oswald, Founder of St. Nazianz, 1854.

**The St. Nazianz Historical Society
St. Nazianz, Wisconsin 54232**



*Crucifix on the pilgrim path leading to the Loretto Chapel.
Hand carved by Brother Martin Unger of the Oswald
Association. Blessed by Fr. Oswald in 1869.*



*Father Ambrose Oswald
1801-1873
Founder of St. Nazianz, Wisconsin
1854*

Loreto* in Italy

*Italian spelling

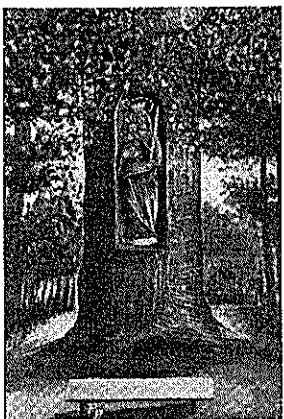
According to legend, the house in which Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived was transported by angels from Nazareth to Loreto in Italy late in the 13th century. A basilica was built over the one-room structure. Today visitors are given literature which suggests another theory as to the transfer of the house to Italy. The stones of the building were sent by ship to the coast near Loreto when the Crusaders departed the Holy Land. The family name of the ship owner was Angelos or De Angelis from which came the legend associated with angels.

History of the Loretto Chapel in St. Nazianz

Over the centuries, the House of Loreto became a well-known Marian shrine. Devotion to Mary under this title spread throughout Europe, including the Black Forest region of Germany where the founder of St. Nazianz, Fr. Ambrose Oswald, was born. When he studied for the priesthood in Freiburg, he would have visited the Loretokapelle (Loretto chapel) on a hill just south of the city. Assigned as pastor to the village of Stühlingen near the Swiss border in 1843, he surely visited the Klosterkirche (monastery church) which honors the "Madonna of Loreto."

In August of 1854, an advance party of men from the Oswald association traveled by ship from Milwaukee to Manitowoc, and by horse and wagon to the area which is now Valders. From there, they made their way through virgin forest on foot. According to local legend, the men were led by a white ox to a place where they felled a tree to erect a cross. Not far from this spot they built a small church, the heart of the community, which today continues to be honored as holy ground.

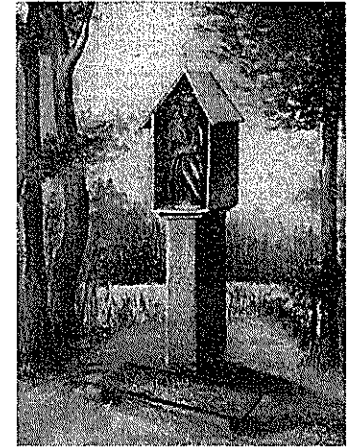
Less than half a mile to the southwest, there is a hill, the highest in the surrounding area, where the Loretto Chapel still stands. In 1855 after the winter snows began to melt, Fr. Oswald climbed this hill holding a statue of Our Lady of Loreto. Because of his great devotion to Mary,



First shrine in linden tree
1855

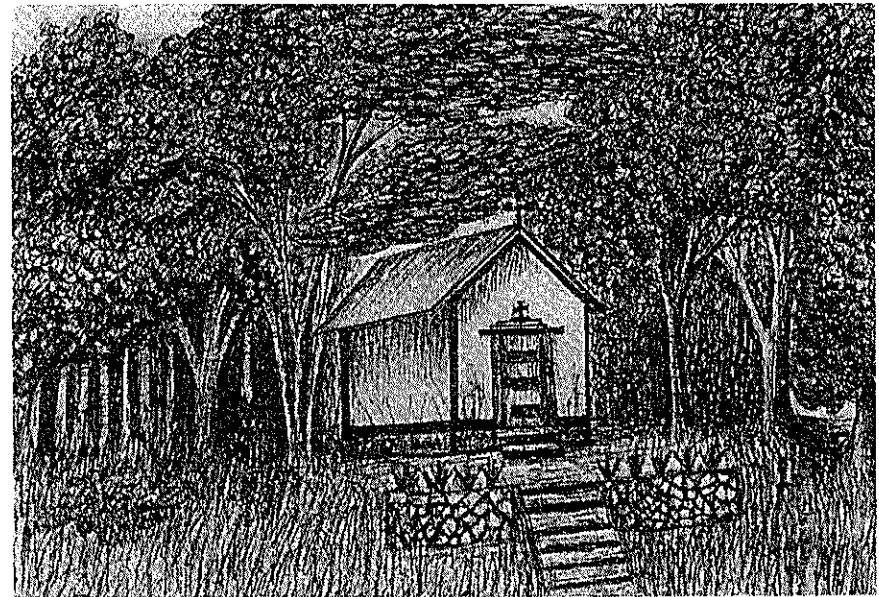
we can assume that his intention was to place St. Nazianz under her care. He put Mary's statue in the niche of a giant linden tree atop the hill. It soon became a place of pilgrimage for the settlers.

On July 6, 1862, the Chronicle records that there was a terrible storm, not unlike the one which devastated St. Nazianz in May of 2000. The linden tree was uprooted, but the statue of Mary was not harmed. Then a wooden shrine mounted on a pedestal was constructed. Many came asking Mary to obtain God's blessings for them.



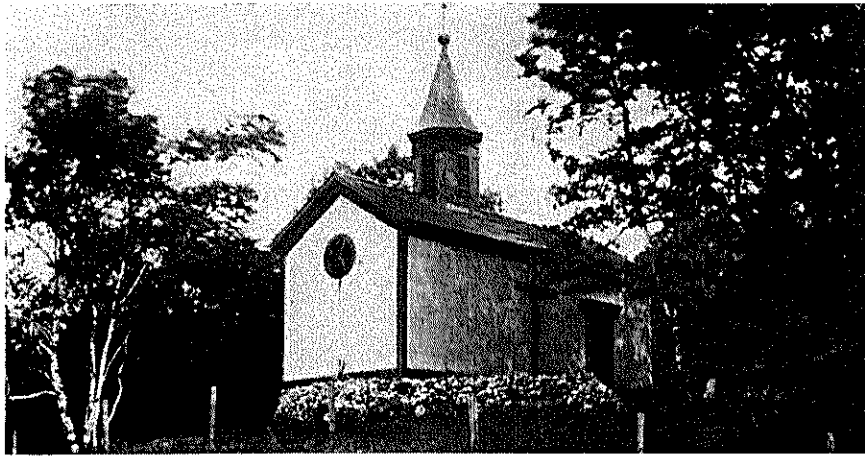
The shrine in 1862.

Some years later during another violent storm, a falling branch shattered the wooden shrine, but again the statue of Mary survived without harm. It was after this that Fr. Oswald and the colonists built a small chapel on the hill. In the autumn of 1870, they constructed the northern half of the present structure. Upon completion, the statue of Our Lady of Loreto was enshrined in the chapel with prayer and song. More and more people came to the little chapel on the



Chapel built in 1870.

hill, so many that it was unable to accommodate all the pilgrims. An extension was added to the south end in 1872, including an attractive steeple.



Our Lady of Loretto Chapel completed in 1872

On September 8 of the same year, with the wind singing in the trees, Fr. Oswald offered the Mass of the feast day which celebrates Mary's birth. Little did he know then that he was to join Mary and the saints in less than six months. While ministering to the sick and burying the dead, he came down with a severe cold which developed into pneumonia. Fr. Oswald died at seven on the morning of February 27, 1873.

Pilgrimages and Processions

The colonists' daily lives were filled with work and regular intervals of prayer in St. Gregory's, the little wooden church which was the heart of their community. Sunday, however, allowed time for an afternoon walk which took them past the Pink Convent, down a hill, along the lake, through the woods, and up to the chapel on Loretto Hill. Dating back to 1860, pilgrimages and processions were common, especially on Holy Days and feast days of Mary. From the Lenten sermons of 1865 recorded by Sister Catharina Mohr, we know that Fr. Oswald encouraged spiritual growth in the community. Stations of the cross built along the path leading to the chapel enabled those who passed to meditate on the sufferings and death of Jesus. The hardships of life in the new world were minor compared to those of the Savior.

Many religious observances and traditions of the Black Forest region of Germany were kept alive by the settlers in Wisconsin. Even today, there are older adults who remember the Corpus Christi processions of their childhood. Girls in white dresses scattered flower petals before the Blessed Sacrament which was carried in a gilded monstrance by the priest while boys in cassocks and surplices formed an honor guard. Banners from parish organizations fluttered in the breeze as adults prayed the rosary and sang well-known hymns. The route followed the same pilgrimage path trod by the settlers, including a stop for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the Loretto Chapel.

Statue of Our Lady of Loretto Stolen

Hurt, anger, and disappointment invaded the village of St. Nazianz in June of 1987 when residents learned that the beloved statue of Mary had been stolen from the Loretto Chapel.

In 1854 the statue, safely packed in Fr. Oswald's trunk, had crossed the Atlantic. It survived two harsh storms in the 1860's, but it could not ward off the hands of a thief. For 133 years pilgrims honored Mary as they prayed before her statue on Loretto Hill. Many who were healed left canes, crutches and votive offerings to witness that their prayers were answered. No one could imagine why anyone would pry open the back of the heavy wood frame of the case which protected the 18 inch statue and walk off with it. Word went out requesting its return, no questions asked, but to no avail.



*Mary responds to the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."
(Detail of painting originally on rear wall).*

Preservation of the Shrine

A Labor of Love

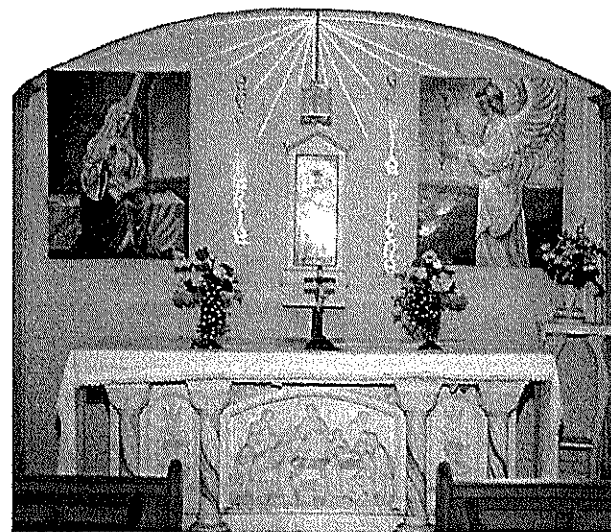
The Society of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians) under the direction of their founder, Fr. Francis Jordan, assumed responsibility for the Loretto Chapel in 1896.

The Salvatorian Brothers were major contributors to the upkeep of Mary's shrine. A mural behind the altar by Brother Felix Simons depicted the angel Gabriel telling Mary that she was to be the mother of the Savior. Brother Cosmos Wambach later painted the Annunciation on two panels. Brother Constantius Kelter wired the structure for electricity. Brother Liberatus Welte, in the nearby blacksmith shop, was the local "guardian angel" of the shrine. Just days after his death, an envelope containing his well-worn watch was found at the base of the statue with a note that read, "O Mary, I beg you to fix this watch for me again, and I will always ring the Angelus bell for you and out of love for Jesus. Your loving son, Brother Liberatus." How beautiful his childlike, strong faith!



The mural of the Annunciation painted by Brother Felix Simons, S.D.S.

The chapel underwent a renovation in 1923, but it was in need of another in 1979 when Brother Gordian Jungwirth's long-held dream of restoring it became a reality. Edna Backhaus and Elaine Bushman, friends of Brother Gordian, joined him in the monumental task of cleaning and painting the interior and exterior. Bob, Elaine's husband, helped to prepare the glass (which she crafted) for the windows.



Paintings of the Annunciation by Brother Cosmos Wambach, S.D.S.

A third and major restoration took place from 2004-06 when members of the St. Nazianz Historical Society accepted the challenge. The wall on the southwest corner extended six inches from the foundation and was ready to collapse. It had to be eased back and up, using one inch steel plates and 25 ton jacks. Supporting timber had rotted away at intervals all around the building and was replaced with brick. A discovery of historical interest was made when the stucco was removed from the outside. Underneath, the color of the original stucco was similar to that of the Oswald Sisters' "Pink Convent" which prompted the decision to apply rose-colored stucco.

Inside, the floor underneath the altar had sunk, so timber had to be replaced. Hardwood salvaged from the original St. Gregory's School became the new floor. Walls were painted, windows repaired, benches stripped and given a new coat of varnish. Ralph Binversie, using pictures of the original statue of Our Lady of Loretto stolen in 1987, carved and painted a replica.

The members of the St. Nazianz Historical Society and area volunteers who for three years literally shouldered the latest renovation are to be commended for their accomplishment. The spirit of Fr. Oswald and the early settlers, alive in their minds, hearts, and helping hands, reflects the motivating force of the religious foundation of 1854. Other communal settlements were made in the Midwest, but St. Nazianz was based on that of the early Christians (Acts 4:32-35).. This is what makes the history of St. Nazianz truly unique!

The Litany of Loretto

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, pray for us.
Holy Mother of God, (repeat response after every invocation)
Holy Virgin of Virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother inviolate,
Mother undefiled,
Mother most amiable,
Mother of good counsel,
Mother of our Creator,
Mother of our Savior,
Virgin most prudent,
Virgin most venerable,
Virgin most renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Spiritual vessel,
Vessel of honor,
Singular vessel of devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,



Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Queen conceived without original sin,
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of peace,
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord!
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us, O Lord!
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us!
Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray

O Lord, pour forth your grace into our hearts that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

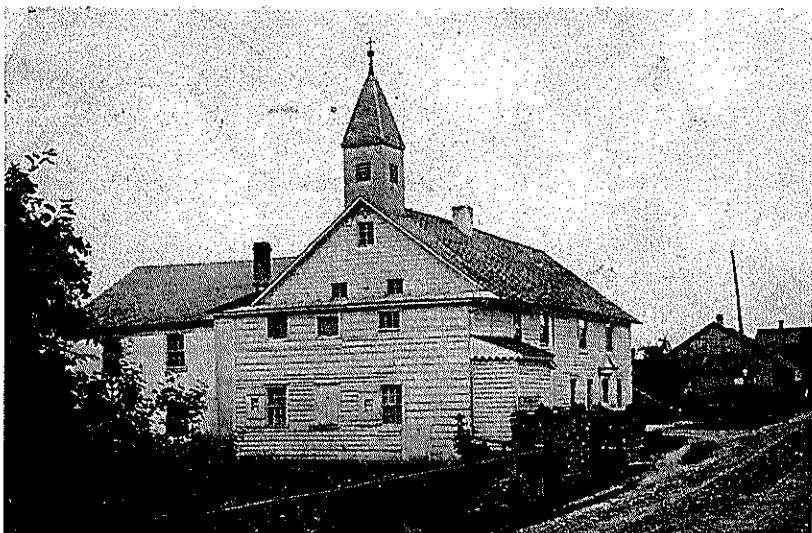
May your divine assistance remain with us and may the souls of the faithful departed, through your mercy, rest in peace. Amen.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Immaculate Mary (Lourdes Hymn)

1. Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing.
 You reign now in Heaven with Jesus our King.
Refrain. Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria! Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!
2. In heaven the blessed your glory proclaim.
 On earth we your children invoke your sweet name. *Refrain*
3. We pray for our Mother, the Church upon earth.
 And bless, Holy Mary, the land of our birth. *Refrain*



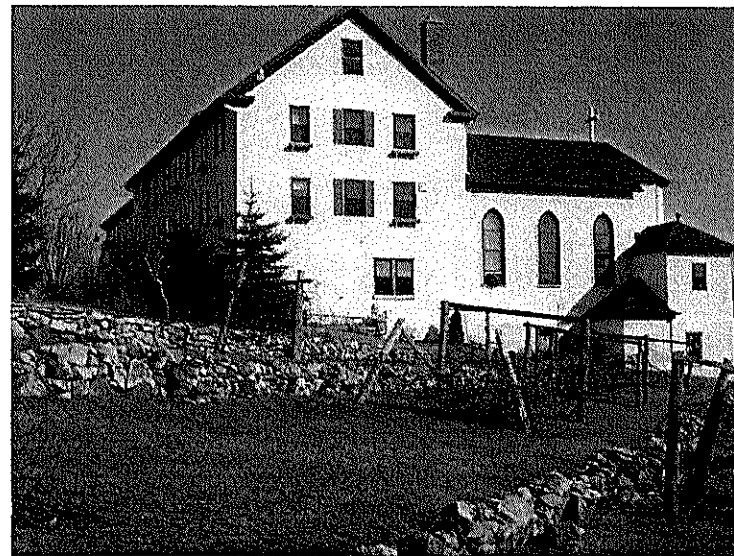
The first St. Gregory's Church. In late August of 1854, men from the Oswald Association arrived in St. Nazianz. Dedication of the church took place on Sunday, Oct. 21, two months later!



The second St. Gregory Church built between 1864-68 with field-stones from the surrounding area. Named after St. Gregory of Nazianzen, a fourth century saint from Cappadocia (present day Turkey), also a Doctor of the Church. (Photo circa 1900.)



The Holy Spirit Convent built in 1858 (quadrangle with an inner court). In 1867, the community of the Oswald Sisters numbered 150. They worked with and for the colonists, in addition to teaching in schools far and wide.



Orphanage and hospital built in 1870. Fr. Oswald studied medicine at the University of Munich and was doctor to the community. Currently, the structure is a retreat and conference center named Maria Haus.



The Loretto Chapel in Winter (circa 1935)

From the 1920's through the 1970's, each winter Brother Liberatus and, later, Brother Gordian daily trudged through the snow to the Loretto Chapel to care for vigil lights requested by benefactors of the Society of the Divine Savior.

The Shrine's 21st Century Benefactors

With gratitude, we acknowledge donors who made monetary contributions and wish to remain anonymous. Because of their generosity, the restoration of this historic shrine has been realized. They are remembered in prayers at the Loretto Chapel.

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