

Iconic Monstrance



"Our Lady of the Sign — Ark of Mercy," was carved from wood by Stefan Niedorezo.

Nine years ago, the Rev. Anthony Bus, CR, pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Chicago, Ill., heard a call from Our Lady to build a Sanctuary of The Divine Mercy on the grounds of his inner-city parish. It was a "mother's plea," he calls it, "to her children to seek refuge in God."

He wrote a best-selling book about this call, [A Mother's Plea: Lifting the Veil in Sanctuary](#) (Marian Press), which has recently been updated. He enlisted Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, vice-postulator for the canonization cause of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, to be a theological advisor in the project. He has experienced innumerable trials and triumphs along the way. The triumphs have far outweighed the trials.

Now, on May 31, the first physical sign of the sanctuary will be unveiled in the form of a nine-foot-tall, gilded monstrance.

"It has not been an easy nine years," said Fr. Anthony. "But Our Lady is in charge. I've always prayed, since the beginning of all this, that if this is not of Our Lady, if it is not the will of God, let it stop. But it just continues to unfold. The fact that we are coming to this moment, which is the first truly tangible sign of the sanctuary, is overwhelming."

The public is invited to attend the unveiling. [Please register](#) if you wish to attend. The unveiling, which begins at 5 p.m. central time, will be televised live on EWTN and on the Latin America station, El Sembrador. Relevant Radio will also provide coverage.

Why all the attention? Father Seraphim, for one, who plans to attend the unveiling, sees

Source: <http://www.thedivinemercy.org/library/article.php?NID=3184>

similarities between Fr. Anthony's efforts and those of a familiar saint.

"In an effort to evaluate the authenticity of this mission, I read *A Mother's Plea* and discovered fascinating parallels between the story that has been unfolding in this inner-city parish and St. Faustina's perseverance in receiving and spreading the message of The Divine Mercy throughout the world," he said. "I believe that these parallels, or connections, are signs of God's providence that can encourage each of us — even as we experience difficulties — to see Jesus, The Divine Mercy, and His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, very much alive in our lives and our world."

A 'Strong Pull'

In an interview last week with thedinivemercy.org, Fr. Anthony recalled how in 1999, while his parish was experiencing deep financial difficulties, he decided to make a consecration of his life to Our Lady. During preparation for the consecration, he felt a "strong pull to Our Lady."

"I heard Our Lady say in a very distinct way, 'Make me Mother and Queen of the parish,'" he recalled. "It was at that point, I consecrated the parish to Our Lady, and then it became very, very clear — an interior intuition or sense or detailed call — that she was asking for a sanctuary for The Divine Mercy, and that was being confirmed right and left, all over the place. We went into the Jubilee Year, and we just had confirmation after confirmation."

Nine years later, what he calls the "jewel of the sanctuary" has been completed. Financed through private donors and proceeds from his book, the iconic monstrance, called "Our Lady of the Sign — Ark of Mercy," was carved from wood by Stefan Niedorezo. Malgorzata Sawczuk did the gilding and served as conservator.

Following the May 31 unveiling, the sanctuary's planners will begin raising funds for the sanctuary itself, which is estimated to cost between \$15 million to \$20 million. The sanctuary will serve as a silent space for perpetual adoration.

'We Need Sacred Space'

"One of the key themes in *A Mother's Plea*," said Fr. Anthony, "is that Our Lady will not permit the cacophony of the world to shout into silence the voice of the Living God," said Fr. Anthony. "We're inundated with noise. We need sacred space, the nurturing and cultivation of sacred silence, so that God's voice can be heard. And we believe this is what Our Lady is asking of us here."

The iconic monstrance will serve as the sanctuary's centerpiece. Drawn from sacred scripture — particularly Revelations 11:19 and 12:1-2 — and Our Lady's role in salvation history, the monstrance depicts Mary as the link between the old and new covenants. She is shown over the Ark of the Covenant. She is "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars," as she is depicted in Revelations. The monstrance places the Eucharist at her breast.

Its unveiling will fall on the Feast of the Visitation. And that's no accident. In *A Mother's Plea*, Fr. Anthony quotes from Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* ("The Eucharist and Its Relationship to the Church"):

When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made Flesh, she became in some way a "tabernacle" — the first "tabernacle" in history — in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed Himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating His light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary.

"Mary's coming to Elizabeth is a source of blessing, just as the coming of ark to the house of Obededom was in the second book of Samuel," said Fr. Anthony, in the interview. "For three months, the Ark of the Lord was left with Obededom and brought a blessing on him and his household just as Mary brought a blessing to the household of Elizabeth. And, of course, as David danced before the ark, John the Baptist leaped for joy in the presence of Mary at the Visitation. The ark helped unite the 12 tribes of Israel by being placed in David's camp, so Mary has the power to unite all Christians in her Son.

"Mary," said Fr. Anthony, "is the link between the old and new testaments. She is not frozen in the pages of sacred scripture. I think the whole Sanctuary of The Divine Mercy that she's asked us to build here is another sign that she is present among us, doing the same thing today as she did 2,000 years ago and as she's done through the whole of Church history. She's very much alive."

A Call to Mercy

Why is the message of Divine Mercy key to this project?

Father Anthony said he believes both the Divine Mercy revelations of St. Faustina and his own call from Our Lady point to the need to be attentive to the signs of the times.

"We are broken," he said, "and there is so much disconnect in the world." Chapels for adoration, he said, can create refuge for a "weary, wayward, wondering, and wandering people" to help them re-connect to our Merciful Lord.

"We're very much in need of God's mercy," he said. "We need to know that God knows us and he loves us and He serves us. It's really in that that we are able to make a response. In other words, when I know that God knows me, then it's much easier to respond. We need to know that we're not just one among the masses, but rather God really knows us in a very personal, very real way. We're His creation, and He desires an intimate and personal relationship with each and every one of us."

The sanctuary will provide a place to tap into that relationship in a deeper way, said Fr. Anthony.

"We've got to come into sacred silence and be disposed so we can hear that voice of mercy," he said. "As Christ says so beautifully to St. Faustina, 'Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet' " (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 699).

He continued, "We're living in a world with so much abuse in the home, alcoholism, gang violence, division within the family, youth that are so confused and lost, and there's no place to go. So often they may think: 'If I go to church I'm going to be preached at,' and they don't want to be preached at, perhaps. But this sanctuary will be a place where they can come and just *be* and where they can find refuge from the storms of their lives.

"And the hope is — and I really believe this will happen because there certainly is a power that emanates from the Holy Eucharist — that there will be an opportunity for conversion and healing and for transformation that will lead them into the church itself," said Fr. Anthony.

Cardinal Francis George, OMI, Archbishop of Chicago, will be the celebrant of Holy Mass during the unveiling ceremony. In January 2007, Cardinal George, who has followed Fr. Anthony's story almost from the beginning, dedicated St. Stanislaus parish and the sanctuary to The Divine Mercy.