



Dear Apostles of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

With all our hearts, we thank you for your generous support and for your prayers. We realize clearly that the New Year will be a singular challenge and that the great pillar of the Holy Rosary will be our joy, consolation, strength and protection. Let us come humbly to the poor crib of the Divine Infant Jesus and learn from Him those virtues which most draw down upon the world God's Mercy.

Oh, what a beautiful time of pilgrimage we enter with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as we journey with them to Bethlehem! Over the hills by day and by night, the sound of rushing trees and flocking birds fills the air. Here, now, we can meditate on our lives seeking to discover ways in which to make room for the Divine Infant King. Possessions beguile our hearts, pamper our bodies and promise us liberty and happiness. Our poor mind is completely occupied with them while lofty thoughts of sacrifice, love and loyalty are smothered. Before us, we face a long stretch of desert. We stand sorely in need of holy joy which can only be obtained through fidelity to grace and faithfulness to the duties of our state in life. Fidelity is the raw material of perseverance, and its importance cannot be exaggerated. Without an interior spirit and supernatural intention, the seed of our words and works is sown upon rocks.

This journey across the hills on foot with the Holy Family will give us true liberty of spirit. May we, too, serve God at the sacrifice of self and with absolute generosity! Let us aspire to have their faith, hope and trust. Is His service our sole work? Is our ruling passion a horror of sin? Are we working towards a devout life? Search out the secret of the Christ Child's infancy. He has done nothing in half measures. His is unreserved generosity for the glory of the Father and the perishing souls of men.

Sinlessness was not the great prerogative of Our Blessed Mother. Her greatness, from the very first moment of her Immaculate Conception, was an entire and joyous surrender of herself to God. This was never retracted for so much as an instant through all her years of labor, prayer, uncertainty and pain. Mary remained firm and intrepid in her love and trust in God from His Birth in the stable at Bethlehem to His Death on the Cross at Calvary. May we embrace Him affectionately and thank Him for loving us and giving to us His very own mother! Let us empty our heart of **things** and make room for the weary travelers who seek refuge from the cold.

GOD LOVE YOU!

Patti Melvin

PATTI MELVIN, ULRA Director

Please pray for me!

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