

What a Gift!!!

Part II

Written by Helen and Michael Rozeluk

What a gift **You** have given us, dear Mother Mary! Who could have ever imagined the wonders we would see as a result of Your kiss during our trip to Ukraine - a trip organized by You, yourself, for the glory of Your Son Jesus. Thank you for a trip that we shall never forget: a journey of love, a journey where Your children came running for Your kiss. Yes, dear Mother Mary, Your kiss is travelling throughout the world and, once again, Your words have come true: "Through My kiss, My Son Jesus, will perform many prodigies throughout the world. Distribute these medals..." Never were words spoken with such truth! Here is our attempt to share with you, dear reader, some of our experiences on this journey to Ukraine in October of 2002. Praised be the Lord!

DAY TWO CONT'D - MEETING WITH BISHOP MUDRY

We were accompanied to the bishop's chancery by Bohdan Shyptur, our trip organizer, and by Father Zenovy Kasko, pastor of the village of Radcha, where we spoke on the first two days of our visit to Ukraine. Father Zenovy, a very devout and holy priest, works closely with the bishop on many eparchial committees. He himself witnessed the first miracles and, as a dutiful priest, immediately reported them to his bishop. Since our visit he also began in his parish a weekly devotion to Mother Mary followed by a healing service and prayers with Our Lady's kissed medal. We have been receiving reports of miraculous healings through his hands since then. But now he was accompanying us to the bishop's chancery as a newly found and dear friend.



When we arrived at the bishop's chancery, we discovered that we were expected. Bishop Sophronius Mudry greeted us very warmly. He had already heard about us from Father Zenovy and from other sources. Now he wished to question us personally and discern for himself. Our conversation with him was very warm

and friendly. He listened very intently as we talked about Garabandal and about our ministry. He was particularly interested in the events of the previous two days because he had already heard about some of the miraculous healings. Then he asked us where we were staying. When Bohdan Shyptur (our trip organizer) told him we were staying at his home, Bishop Mudry immediately replied that, as of that moment and for the remainder of our stay in his eparchy (diocese), we would be lodging with him at his private residence. He personally showed us to our rooms and introduced us to his staff, whom he sent to Bohdan's home to retrieve our luggage. His office was made available to us for personal meetings, whenever we required. This decision on the part of the bishop was truly providential, as we later discovered. Had we remained in anyone's private home or even in a hotel, we would have been besieged by visitors at all hours of the day and night. The privacy of the chancery and the vigilance of the bishop's staff permitted us to sleep undisturbed and have personal quiet time for prayer and rest.

We felt very much at home with Bishop Mudry, as though under our own daddy's wing. We found him to be very much a man of God and true to his name. (In Ukrainian, "mudry" means "wise"). That Sunday evening we had our first of many meals with the bishop and his staff. They were like true family meals, the father at the head of the table, surrounded by his children. He always took time to speak to each one, asking about the day's events, discussing schedules, jobs to be done, giving loving instructions. We simply became two more welcome members of this family. That evening bishop had us show him the documentary video on Garabandal, which he watched with great interest.

DAY THREE - THE SEMINARY

The next day, Monday, Helen and I arose early for the 7:30 a.m. Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Mudry in his private chapel. The chapel was only two rooms away from ours. It was so beautiful to be living under the same roof with Jesus! What a blessing!

That afternoon, Bishop Mudry personally took us to our next presentation, which was at the Academy of Theological Studies in Ivano-Frankivsk. He introduced us to the rector and gave us a small tour of the complex, which includes classrooms, study halls, a large library, chapel, auditorium and student residence. At present there are 300 seminarians studying there, with a long waiting list of applicants. Bishop Mudry told us that his eparchy has been blessed with many, many vocations. The only difficulty is space and funding.

Following our short tour, Bishop Mudry ushered us into the seminary auditorium. The hall was filled with all 300 seminarians and their families. This evening's event was not open to the general public. Bishop Mudry personally introduced us to everyone. He prayed the rosary with us and watched the Garabandal documentary video with us. Then he blessed us in front of everyone and was first to come forward to venerate the Garabandal medal, asking us to pray over him before the entire student body. Following our talk, all the seminarians filed up to venerate the medal. All at once, the young seminarians spontaneously began to sing hymns to Our Blessed Mother. We were enthralled. This was not just any folk singing. It was beautiful choral music, in four-part harmony, sung with clear angelic voices, like a professional men's choir. We thought we were in heaven.

Still, there were many, many health concerns presented to us: spinal problems, kidneys, liver, throat, knees, chronic headaches. But their faith and devotion was strong. Every single young man took rosaries, scapulars, holy pictures and/or touched their own to our medals. This was a truly blessed evening.

Bohdan Shyptur, our trip organizer, arrived late at this event because something had broken in his car and had needed to be repaired. When he was driving us back to the bishop's chancery, he was in complete awe. He was only just beginning to understand how God arranges apparently bad events for His good purpose. The fact was that, when Bohdan went to pick up his car from the repair shop, the mechanic (who just happens to live in the village of Radcha, where we had spoken on the previous two days) told him that his neighbour has

a seven-year-old son who had not spoken a word since he was born. Following our prayers over him the previous day, the child began to speak. Had Bohdan's car not needed repairs, he would probably never have found out about this miracle!

DAY FOUR - THE BASILIAN MONASTERY

Tuesday, September 24th began, like the previous day, with Holy Mass in the bishop's private chapel, followed by breakfast with him and his staff. Bishop Mudry asked us about our impressions of the previous evening's visit to the seminary. He was particularly concerned that many true vocations are being sent away because of lack of funding. This is especially true in the case of orphans and young men from very poor families. He expressed a wish that some good souls could be found who would sponsor at least one such seminarian. It costs about \$600 US yearly to maintain one student in the seminary.

After breakfast, Bishop Mudry left for the airport in Lviv to meet the Archbishop of Jerusalem, who was arriving for an official visit of Ukraine that day. We, on the other hand, were asked to pray with several of the chancery staff, each of whom approached us individually. The chapel was in constant use that morning, as on the following days.

Later that same day, we visited the elderly Bishop emeritus of the diocese, Bishop Sophronius Dmyterko. This is another holy and pious priest with a brilliant mind and quite witty. However, because of total physical disability, he is bedridden and in the care of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate. This order of nuns was founded over 100 years ago and has now spread over four continents. Their foundress, Sister Josafata, was beatified by Pope John Paul II only three months before our visit to Ukraine.

We were greeted at the door by one of the young sisters and quickly ushered in to see Bishop Dmyterko. Again, we were being expected. Bishop Dmyterko was very interested in our story and in the apparitions of Garabandal. We shared with him and the sisters some of our experiences of the last three days. Bishop asked us to pray with him, then he himself blessed us, hugged us both and kissed each of us on the forehead. He told us to continue our work for Our Lady. Before leaving, we gave him and the sisters each a reliquary medal from Garabandal and a copy of the Garabandal documentary video.

Directly from Bishop Dmyterko, we went to our next presentation at the Basilian Monastery in Ivano-Frankivsk. When we arrived, we had to be escorted inside through the back doors because the crowd was so great that there was absolutely no way to get in through the main entrance. Not only was the monastery church filled to absolute capacity (up to 2000 people), but the auditorium in the adjacent building was also filled to overflowing (another 600-750 people). The priests had never experienced such crowds here before. After consulting with us, the pastor decided to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for those in the church while we spoke to the crowd in the auditorium. Following this, one of us would go to the church, while the other remained in the hall. In this way everyone who came would have the opportunity to venerate the medal with Our Lady's kiss.

We gave a brief talk about Our Lady's message in Garabandal. Father Zenovy then invoked a general prayer over everyone. Then, while Father Zenovy and I went into the church to minister to the sea of people there, Helen remained in the auditorium. Helen will write what she experienced:

Our experiences of the first couple of days made us quickly aware that crowd control was of the utmost importance wherever we were. In the auditorium I had the advantage of being on a stage with stairs on either side. People filed up, up one staircase, kissed my medal and then left by the opposite staircase.

A young mother approached me, holding her 6-7 year old son in her arms. She told me his legs were paralyzed. Indeed, his little stick-like legs were just dangling there. As I reached out to give him the medal to

kiss, I heard interiorly a loud voice saying, "Who do you think you are? What sort of nonsense do you think you can do here?" Immediately, another loud voice told me, "Take the child in your arms!" I took the child from his mother and gave him the medal to kiss.

No sooner had I done this, when the voice said, "Put the child on the ground!" Then the other voice again, "Who do you think you are? Just watch him fall on his face and everyone will laugh. What kind of do-gooder will you be then?" And again the first voice, even more forcefully, "Put the child on the ground!"

In spite of the mother's protests, I placed the little boy on the floor. And he stood! I held him gently by the shoulders and asked him if he could take a step. And he did! And another step, and another... Finally I asked his mother to stand on the other end of the stage while I slowly led him, first by the shoulders, then by the elbows, then I completely let go and the little one walked the rest of the way by himself into his mother's arms. What a wondrous miracle! Everyone wept with joy as the mother embraced her son, who walked for the first time! Later on, we found out that this little boy was the son of an orthodox priest. How good Mother Mary is! She always reminds us that we are all Her children and She doesn't differentiate among us the way we ourselves do.

Slowly the crowd in the auditorium dispersed. The priests and I decided to join Michael and Father Zenovy in the church. There were so many people in the church, pushing and shoving that Michael was pushed right up against the altar. This was all the more shocking when one realizes that, in a Byzantine rite church, no lay person is allowed past the altar steps. In addition to that, Michael was literally knocked over twice by the push of the crowd. Again the priests had to exert their authority to restore some semblance of order. But it was worth it. Mother Mary was there and the faces of the people showed their great faith and love. They had the patience but feared that we might go home at any moment. God gave us the strength to be there with these people until each and every one of them had had the opportunity to venerate the medal. We finally finished around midnight, when the priest-monks invited us for a bite to eat. We returned to the bishop's residence sometime after 1 a.m. and went to bed exhausted but so very happy.

DAY FIVE - THE CATHEDRAL

It was now Wednesday, September 25th. During breakfast, following the early morning Divine Liturgy, Bishop Mudry asked us about the previous evening's event. He was genuinely interested in everything that took place, as well as the stories of the healings which had occurred in front of numerous witnesses. As soon as he heard about the difficulties with the crowds and the fact that I was knocked over, Bishop Mudry immediately called the seminary, instructing them to assign six seminarians to each of us as bodyguards for all our subsequent appearances in his eparchy. This decision of his was providential, because we were to be speaking at his cathedral that evening.



We arrived at the cathedral quite early that day in order to meet with some relatives, who had travelled a long distance to be with us. They came with a busload of people from the same very poor village. There is only one church in that village, an orthodox church, but the devotion to Mother Mary is very strong there. Thus, because of circumstances, they were all orthodox. But, to Our Lady, we are all Her children. These poor villagers, driven by faith alone, collected their pennies together and hired a bus to come all the way to Ivano-Frankivsk from the neighbouring province. They waited all day. They heard how important it was to go to confession. In our presence, at the cathedral, they found a Catholic priest and all went to confession. The rest was in Our Lady's hands. We saw them again very briefly in the evening and they were gone. But something miraculous also happened to them all. Later in the week, we were informed that every one of them, all 35 were healed that evening.

At the cathedral that evening, the crowd was huge. The cathedral holds about 1,200 people comfortably. That evening there were between 2000-2500 people there. The evening began at 6 p.m. with the Divine Liturgy. Then, after our presentation and talk, the pastor placed us at the exit doors: Michael at the front entrance, Helen at the sacristy exit, each of us surrounded by six seminarians. Thus, the people were compelled to file out of the church past us, venerate the medal and leave. This method of crowd control turned out to be the best yet, and we employed it from then on at each place we spoke.

As the people came up to kiss our medals, several approached with testimonies of healings already received. One young girl said that she has not needed her inhaler (for asthma) since she was prayed over in Radcha. Another woman told us her eyes had improved. Still another said her epileptic seizures had subsided.

Then a young 10 year old girl on crutches came up, assisted by her mother. Evidently she had to use the crutches for a long time and was unable to stand on her own feet without pain (The mother explained that her daughter has had chronic osteomyelitis for many years). When she came up for prayer, I (Michael) felt the need to spend a little extra time with her. After praying for her, I told her that she does not require the crutches any more because Jesus has healed her. I took the right crutch from her and asked her to put her weight on her right foot. She did so, without pain. Then I took the left crutch from her. Everyone around us stood with bated breath as they watched another miracle unfolding. I stepped away from the girl and asked her to walk to me. She did so without any difficulty whatsoever. Her crutches were passed from hand to hand over people's heads and were lost in the crowd. Her mother stood in awe, looking at her daughter walking freely. Everyone who witnessed this miracle could feel God's presence. The onslaught and crush of the people was now even more unrelenting and more determined to kiss this medal of Our Lady of Garabandal.

Many, many people came up and told us that they were orthodox. Many orthodox priests also came and invited us to speak in their parishes but time constraints prevented us from accepting these invitations. But

everyone was there to venerate Mother Mary's kissed medal from Garabandal. And She was there for all of them.

By 11 p.m. everyone had finally dispersed. The pastor of the cathedral then invited us to the parish dining room for a very late supper. Then, tired but full of peace and joy, we returned to the chancery at about 1 a.m.

DAY SIX - VILLAGE OF VOVCHYNTSI

Thursday, September 26th began a little differently than usual. Bishop Mudry left early to meet with the archbishop of Jerusalem, who was to be visiting Ivano-Frankivsk that day. A pontifical Divine Liturgy was to be concelebrated by them in the cathedral. Because of our own prescheduled itinerary, we attended Mass in a little church just around the corner from the chancery. We were sure that we were inconspicuous. Not so. Before the end of the Holy Liturgy, we noticed the priest whispering something to the altar server, who then walked up to us and asked if we were prepared to say a few words after Mass. Unfortunately, that was not possible. After a quick breakfast at the chancery, we were on the road again.



Our talk that day was in the little village of Vovchyntsi, near Ivano-Frankivsk. The old wooden church was truly beautiful inside. The gilded carvings and sculptures, icons and murals together with the ornate altar and tabernacle would put our western churches to shame. As a matter of fact, we found ALL churches in Ukraine, whether old or recently built, to be worthy tributes of a people to their God. As poor as they are, the people

here spare nothing to honour God and His holy temple. Only the best is good enough for Our Lord's dwelling. What a contrast to the concrete warehouses we affluent westerners dare to call houses of God!

Because the next day, according to the Julian calendar, was the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Father Mykola Luzhny, pastor of the church in Vovchyntsi, began with vespers of the vigil. We then spoke briefly, as usual, about Garabandal and Our Lady's messages. Then, after a general blessing, Father placed both of us on either side of the entrance doors. Thus people were able to form a double file to come and kiss either one of our medals and then exit the church.

For some reason, most of the people chose to line up in front of me, while Helen was left standing. One person kissed my medal and suddenly fell to the floor. The next one also fell, and the next and the next. I looked up to give my medal to the next person. There was no one there. Everyone had quickly darted into Helen's lineup. They all looked terrified. You must realize that falling or resting in the Spirit was completely unknown to these people. They were really frightened, never having seen or heard of this before. Only when a very pious monk came up for prayers and was "slain" in the same way, the thoughts of fear were laid to rest and it was possible to explain and be understood by these innocent people.

Again, as in every parish, after we finished, we were invited to a very late dinner at the pastor's home. We returned to the chancery around 1:30 a.m.

DAY SEVEN - RECORD CROWD AT CATHEDRAL

Every day of our visit to Ukraine filled us with awe. I asked my wife, Helen, to wake me up from this dream. Nobody could have predicted the tremendous miracles that God would perform for these poor people. Yes, we were blessed to have witnessed miracles many times before, but nothing had prepared us for the spectacular, truly biblical, miracles we were seeing here day after day!

On Friday, September 27th, we were speaking again at the bishop's cathedral in Ivano-Frankivsk. This time the crowd numbered at least 5000 people. Not only was the cathedral packed to the rafters but the crowd overflowed into and filled the large city square around it. What an unforgettable sight!

During the Divine Liturgy, the priests found it impossible to even distribute Holy Communion because there was absolutely no room for the priests or the faithful to move. They were compelled to conclude the Divine Liturgy and offer Holy Communion, as the church slowly emptied, to those who wished to receive.

Our previous set-up at the church exits was now impossible, because the crowds came from all directions, indoors and out. The pastor decided to place Helen at the side door, to minister to those exiting the church, while I was directed to the outdoor shrine with a statue of Mother Mary in the middle of the church square. Several strong men were enlisted to hold back and direct the crowd, in addition to the six seminarians assigned to guard each of us but they themselves were overwhelmed by the numbers of people and could not handle the situation. Crowd control was virtually impossible. Lineups were impossible because of the sheer numbers of people: not a square inch of pavement was empty. People were pushing, shoving, being trampled. Finally, Helen was compelled to move behind the narrow gate of a wrought iron fence, through which people could approach one by one. Even so, some poor souls were being crushed into the fence itself. The crush of the crowd almost pushed down the fence. I, on the other hand, being out in the open and surrounded by people on all sides, found myself in serious danger of being knocked down and trampled. A local newspaper photographer was forced to leave his camera and help restrain the crowd in order to protect me from being crushed. As a result, he never did take any pictures for his newspaper that evening.

It was Our Lady Herself, who came to the rescue. Helen called out to the crowd, instructing them to repeat the "Hail Mary" with her continuously, while they waited their turn. As long as the crowd repeated the prayer,

order and peace was maintained. As soon as prayers quieted down, the evil one reared his head and chaos returned. It was necessary to remind people to continue praying constantly. Soon after, someone cried, "Look! A miracle!" We looked up and saw, for the first time ever in Ukraine, a single file of people lined up in an orderly zigzag through the square! Humanly speaking, this would have been impossible to do anywhere, given a crowd this size! And, as long as the Hail Mary's continued, the lineup remained. No sooner did prayer subside, when the lineup would become a mob again. Mother Mary was teaching Her children that, to restore peace and order of any kind, we must pray to Her continuously. She takes care of the rest.

A young couple came up to me, carrying their little four-year-old son in their arms. He was crippled and unable to walk. They held him up to me and the child fearlessly came into my arms. I held him and spoke to him. He calmly listened to what I said. Then he kissed my medal and I handed him back to his parents. And then I said something most strange. I said, "Go home. Pray. Have faith. Your son will walk within a week".

I was amazed by those words myself and wondered why I said them. But, only three days later, when our organizers were videotaping the testimonies of those who had been healed, this young couple was present with their little son. The video tape shows him running around the hall, laughing at the fun of it. When we returned to Canada, we were sent a copy of a newspaper article written by these people, giving beautiful testimony to their son's healing by the Lord and thanking Our Lady for Her intercession. (This testimony can also be read on our web site).

As a young woman approached me, I felt the need to pray for her a little longer. Suddenly, she exclaimed that she could now move her head and body freely without pain. The pain was suddenly gone. She was able to turn her head, bend her neck, she twisted her upper body and bent right down to the floor, something she had been unable to do before. Praise be to God!

Right after this, a young mother approached, asking for prayers for her very ill child. Afterwards, she asked to be prayed over herself. As I lifted the medal to her, I suddenly knew....she had not been to confession for an extremely long time and my prayers could not continue. When I confronted her with this, she confirmed it. Helen and I, in our talks, repeatedly stress the importance of frequent confession, as Mother Mary instructed in Garabandal. This woman had chosen to ignore what she had heard us say and refused to go to confession. To everyone's surprise, I shouted to her that it was her sins that were causing her daughter's illness. She ran away. I hope and pray that it was to a priest.

Towards the end of the evening, as the crowds were finally dispersing, the pastor of the cathedral asked Helen to come with him to the sacristy, to pray for two young women is special need. Helen continues:

I entered the sacristy with my "entourage" of young seminarians. Seated on the sofa there were two young ladies. Their loved ones were present also. Father told me that one of the girls was having trouble walking because of a problem with her legs, while the other suffered a severe form of epilepsy. After introducing them, Father went back to his duties in the church.

In addition to our medals from Garabandal, Michael and I have been blessed to have in our possession a crucifix containing a piece of the True Cross. I knelt in front of the two seated girls. Holding my Garabandal medal in my right hand, with my left I took out the crucifix and began to pray over the young woman that had leg problems. No sooner had the crucifix appeared, when the "epileptic" sitting next to her began to shake uncontrollably. I knew immediately that this was no mere case of epilepsy. Jesus' cross does not trigger epilepsy. Only one thing reacts this way in the presence of blessed objects and especially if it is the Cross of Jesus. Immediately I transferred my attention to this poor girl. But as soon as I touched her with the crucifix, she began to be shaken and thrown about like a rag doll. Six men had trouble holding her down. I sent one of the seminarians to summon the priest and began to invoke St. Michael and recite prayers of deliverance and protection. The young woman continued to thrash about, but she was also praying with me all the while,

asking Our Lady to help her. This was a good sign. The girl was resisting her attacker. Everyone present prayed continuously. Finally, the pastor arrived with holy water. He "showered" everyone with the holy water, especially the poor girl and quickly took charge of the situation, exorcising the young woman's attacker. Finally, she stopped flailing about and peacefully, with a joyful smile on her face, uttered a prayer of thanksgiving. Everyone was moved to tears.

Now I was able to continue praying for the young woman with leg problems. This prayer continued without incident and, having expressed our gratitude to the seminarians and said our good-byes, everyone slowly dispersed. I was now alone. As I was about to leave the sacristy, another woman approached me, asking me to pray for her sister, whom she was leading by the hand. I looked at her and saw a gaunt, pale-skinned person, with bulging and badly distorted eyes, both of which were turned outward to either side. As I raised up the medal and crucifix towards her, she suddenly jumped back with her hands extended claw-like and growled like a wild beast. Then she tried to flee, but I ordered her to return. She slowly approached me, like an animal ready to pounce. All the while, I was praying. She suddenly grabbed the crucifix with her left hand and tried to wrench it from my hand. I continued to pray. She tried to stare me down, still trying to get hold of the crucifix. I continued to pray. Then she made a fist with her right hand and swung at my jaw with all her might but, as her fist made contact with my face, it was only able to gently stroke it. I continued to pray. This infuriated her and she swung at me again, only to stroke my face again gently. Still I continued to pray. Angered even more, she tried yet again with the same results. At that moment, I began the prayer to St. Michael. The Archangel's name was enough to frighten her so much that she ran off in fear. I then turned to the sister and told her that she must seek the help of a priest-exorcist for help in this case. Later, when I spoke to the pastor about this last encounter, he replied that he is very familiar with her case. Her whole family has had a history of possession and keeps the priests quite busy with exorcisms.

There is no question that we, all of us present, were indeed in grave and serious danger. Still, we were given the confirmation that St. Michael the Archangel defeated and continues to defeat the powers of hell. I am ever grateful for this lesson because it served as a preparation for new encounters of a similar nature later on during our trip.

Strangely enough, although the crowd that evening was twice as large as before, by 10:30 that evening we were already having supper with the pastor and our other companions in the parish dining room. Now that was no small miracle!

End of part 2 ... to be continued

[Part 3, the final part of this trip.](#)

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Toronto, Canada
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