

## CONSIDERATIONS ON THE THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY: THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Third Joyful Mysteries' Meditation for each bead as recommended by St. Louis De Montfort<sup>1</sup> are as follows:

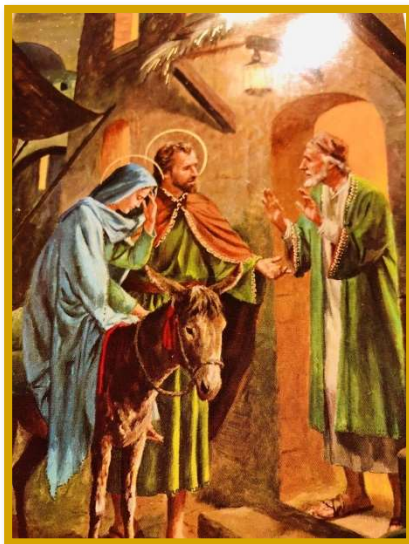
1. To honor our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph for the contempt and rejection they suffered in Bethlehem.
2. To honor the poverty of the stable in which God was born.
3. To honor the deep contemplation and immense love of our Blessed Mother.
4. To honor the virginal birth of Jesus.
5. To honor the adoration and canticle of the angels at the birth of Jesus Christ.
6. To honor the enchanting beauty of His divine infancy.
7. To honor the coming of the shepherds, bringing their gifts to the stable.
8. To honor the circumcision of Jesus.
9. To honor the imposition of the name of Jesus and its grandeur.
10. To honor the adoration of the Magi Kings and their symbolic presents.

Most of the Meditation for each bead is self-explanatory. The most intriguing ones we will consider - **The First, The Second, The Fourth, The Fifth and The Tenth.**

**THE FIRST BEAD: To honor our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph for the contempt and rejection they suffered in Bethlehem.**

Since childhood, whenever Christmas comes we are reminded that when our Blessed Mother was coming close to her delivery time, they had to go to Bethlehem for the tax census. There as the story goes they suffered rejection and contempt. At that time, I always had a feeling that the people of Bethlehem were mean and wicked people. Maybe they were but for a truly human nature reaction. Human nature reason? Yes!

People always frown on a married couple when they have a huge age difference. Our Blessed Mother must be 13 or 14 at that time and St. Joseph, based on the book, *The Life of Mary According to the Mystics*, must in his forties or fifties. Plus the fact that our Blessed Mother is so beautiful, that people looked on them as almost a grandfather married to a pretty teenager. That is human nature, brutal as it is.



NO ROOM IN THE INN

What really made our Blessed Mother's heart so sad is that Bethlehem is the city where St. Joseph grew up and the ones who threw them out used to be his friends and playmates. In the same aforementioned book, St. Joseph was described as coming from a well-to-do family like our Blessed Mother. But he had no interest in anything connected with the material world except working with wood. He decided to be a carpenter and was a well-known master craftsman. He earned his own money by selling his woodcraft. We have no samples of his artistry except the beautiful spiral staircase in the Loreto Chapel, in Santa Fe, Mexico.<sup>2</sup> His reputation as a master craftsman was known all over in Bethlehem, so he had no qualms going back showing his face those who know him. He thought they would be happy to see him with a beautiful new bride and accommodate them immediately. For the reverse to happen broke his heart, but his faith in the salvific plans of God made him move on with courage and determination. According our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph cleaned and arranged the cave in Bethlehem so that our Blessed Mother and the coming Jesus would at least be able to live with the animals.

<sup>1</sup> 'How to Say Your Rosary with St. Louis De Monfort', Montfort Publications, 26 South Saxon Avenue, Bay Shore, New York

<sup>2</sup> Story in Appendix A.

Could you imagine yourself suffering the same fate as the Holy Family that night? With the Siberian express causing havoc in our nation this Christmas weekend, it is just a reminder that we have to feel the same freezing attitude and weather our Holy Family suffered during that time. Surely, our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph would be glad when we pause and thank them for suffering for us in their obedience to God in order to bring us The Savior.

#### THE SECOND BEAD: To honor the poverty of the stable in which God was born

Living in a cave with animals is really bad enough for anyone but when you consider how this thing came about on the perspective of where Jesus came from, it becomes poignant and makes us appreciate what Jesus did. In Jesus' situation what He did is just unimaginable. We have to remember Jesus is God and lives in glory in Heaven with His Father and the Holy Ghost. In Heaven happiness, joy comfort and glory are in the superlatives. Then He leaves it all to come here.

Because man could not accept the age difference between our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, they were rejected and have to find accommodations where animals live. From His glorious throne in Heaven, here He comes for the first time as the Infant-God lying down on the trough where animals eat and drink. The penurious condition of the cave was unsettling enough. But then the itchiness of the hay stickers poking through the cloth where He lay would have caused of skin irritation and at worse skin blisters to an infant. His love for mankind is undeniable even in His first time on earth – He suffered immediately!

First time on earth – suffer right away! How did we miss this sacrifice? We owe Him gratitude for suffering immediately in His first hours as a human being on this earth. Let's gratefully pause again and contemplate on how much He loves us. We have better quarters and still complain. When we lie down on our soft, comfortable beds, let's thank Him again for such comfort which He deprived Himself of.

#### THE FOURTH BEAD: To honor the virginal birth of Jesus.

Humans and others in the animal kingdom in delivering an offspring goes through a plethora of suffering and pain. This is the first consequence of the original sin of our first parents. So how does a virginal birth come about? Before this writer's complete conversion to Catholic Traditionalism he listened to every religious broadcast both Catholic and Protestant. In one Christmas dissertation by a female preacher, she was talking about the mess that the birth of Jesus had caused. She was talking about the placenta and liquid to be cleaned, etc., etc. So this looking-for-the-right-way lost Catholic believed these human preachers of human wisdom. When he turned to God with trust, He finally put me in the right path. He received a card from TAN Books offering 50 books and booklets for \$50. The story of the virginal birth, Our Blessed Mother narrated from the aforementioned book.

Our Blessed Mother said that knowing that her time was up, she prayed and meditated on her forthcoming delivery. In an instant, **Jesus was in her hands!** No placenta, no liquid, no mess! From then on, for this salvation-searching ignoramus, vowed not to listen to any more broadcast from this humanly wise preachers. This virginal birth makes us wonder what human birthing would have been, if our first parents did not fall. But let us not blame them for we ourselves are subject to many worse errors and mistakes.

#### THE FIFTH BEAD: To honor the adoration and canticle of the angels at the birth of Jesus Christ.

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." (Luke 2:14) This the angels announced to the shepherds at the time of Jesus virginal birth. It is a subjective greeting: peace on earth to men of good will. Peace to you, if you are of good will. Why because human nature is subject to all sorts of adverse feelings toward his neighbor. There is competition for honor or





reputation, for wealth, for more romantic relationships, etc., etc.. Not too many are of good will. Some are of good will only to those who approve of their lifestyle, even nefarious, and idiosyncrasies.

But wait the Protestants did it better. They changed the above verse to: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth: **peace, good will toward men.**”<sup>3</sup> This greeting **makes everyone feel good** – the essence of the falsity of the Protestant doctrine. That’s why people gravitate to them, everyone is saved just have faith. So this monumental event in the history of mankind is used also by the infernal forces to use fake information to misdirect souls to the slippery path to Hades.

**THE TENTH BEAD: To honor the adoration of the Magi Kings and their symbolic presents.**



Trying to make do of an uncomfortable situation, the Holy Family persevered in order to obey God. Then the Three Wise Men, Melchor, Gaspar Baltazar with their entourage showed suddenly to give homage to the Messiah. Rejection, contempt, discomfort – then glorification! What a way Divine Providence works! It is The Epiphany of Jesus! Now He is truly manifested to the world as the prophesied Messiah on whom all of the prophets and the patriarchs waited for, for many centuries! As always, God has it always this way. Due to original sin, suffering, trials and tribulations precede glory and comfort.

So this lesson on Christmas Day from the Babe in the manger and His rejected Holy Parents should always be

amplified in our hearts. That adversity of any kind we should accept as God’s preparation to bless us wonderfully later on!



## Appendix A

### THE MIRACULOUS STAIRCASE OF ST. JOSEPH<sup>4</sup>

#### A BIT OF HISTORY

After the United States’ victory in the Mexican-American War, a vast piece of land in the Southwest was ceded in 1848 to America. The Spanish town, La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asis (“The Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi”), founded in 1610, became the capital of the state of New Mexico, with the new name of Santa Fe. It was then occupied by Indians, Mexicans and Spaniards.

Simultaneously, a young French-American priest stationed in Cincinnati, Ohio, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Lamy was appointed the bishop for this new acquired territory. When he arrived, many priests, resenting him as an interloper, decided to return to Mexico leaving the new diocese with a few priests and educators. In response, Bishop Lamy wrote pleas requesting priests, brothers and sisters for his diocese: “I have 6000 Catholics and 300 Americans” he explained! The first to accept his plea were the Sisters of Loretto.

#### ADMIRABLE SISTERS

This young congregation, founded in 1812 by Fr. Charles Nerinckx under the name of “the Little Society of the Friends of Mary under the Cross of Jesus,” was the first order of sisters created in the United States. When they named their little log cabin “Little Loretto” in honor of the Holy Family, they became known as the “Loretto Sisters”.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Luke-Chapter-2/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sspx.org/en/news-events/news/st-josephs-miraculous-staircase-2774>

In 1852, 7 courageous sisters left the safe, secure and civilized state of Kentucky and began the arduous journey to Santa Fe.

Their trek was through St. Louis, then westward along the Missouri River to Independence, Missouri. The small group was beset by a cholera epidemic; the superior, Mother Matilda died, while another sister was too ill and had to return to Kentucky. The remaining 5 continued their travel by wagon through bad weather and hostile Indians, a journey of several months that included struggles and fears, broken axles and wheels, sights of sun-bleached bones and scorching days.

### LORETTO CHAPEL

The sisters did not speak Spanish when they arrived; nevertheless, supported by Bishop Lamy, they started the school the following year in 1853, “for the education of young ladies”. Through tuitions, donations, inheritances, and dowries from their families, they built the convent, chapel and school (titled the Loretto Academy of Our Lady of Light).

Bishop Lamy brought the architect Antoine Mouly from Paris to build his cathedral. As an architect, he had been involved in the renovation of the Ste. Chapelle in Paris, France in the early 1800s. When asked by the Loretto Sisters to design their chapel, he fashioned it in a beautiful Gothic style after the Ste. Chapelle.

Skilled craftsmen and artisans from France and Italy were brought to assist the qualified local builders for the bishop’s cathedral. They also helped with the sister’s chapel. The entire design and craftsmanship were executed majestically but not at a large expense the sisters could not afford.

### A PROBLEM

The chapel was built with a choir loft but installing stairs was a problem. During the fourth year of the chapel’s construction the sisters faced a dilemma. The school was growing with more students each year. A typical staircase would use too much floor space thereby limiting seating in the chapel. On another hand, using a ladder to ascend the loft would be terrifying and unfitting for the sisters and the girls. Mother Magdalen called in many carpenters to try to build a stairway; but each, in his turn, measured, thought, and then shook his head sadly saying, “It can’t be done, Mother” (“No se puede, Madrecita”).

These sisters though were ladies of great faith! They decided to entrust the difficulty to the one they had placed the construction of their chapel under: St. Joseph. So, sisters and students together began a 9-day novena to St. Joseph, asking for his intervention. It was not surprising therefore when on the 9th and final day of the novena, there appeared at the school an old, gray-haired and bearded man with a donkey and a tool chest; a carpenter who offered to build the needed staircase. He was hired and proceeded to go to work.

### ANSWER TO A PRAYER

One would not pay an itinerant craftsman until after the job was completed. Mother Magdalen wrote she didn’t even ask the name of the mysterious carpenter. During these times it was considered immodest for the sisters and the girls to carry on a conversation with a male laborer. They just remembered that the only tools he had were a hammer, a saw and a T square. And he worked during more than 6 months.[1] When the work was completed, Mother Magdalen went to pay him, but he had vanished. She went to the local lumber yard to pay at least for the wood, but they knew nothing of the matter there!

### WONDER OF CONSTRUCTION

The winding stairway that St. Joseph left for the sisters and their students is a masterpiece of beauty and wonder. It makes two complete 360 degrees turns. There is no supporting pole up the center as most circular stairways have. This means that it hangs without support, and the transferred weight is solely on the base. Until now, no consensus among engineers having reached to give a scientific explanation.[2]

The short pieces of wood 3 to 5 feet in length were put together only with hundreds of square wooden pegs used with great precision and exceptional craftsmanship. There are no nails, screws nor glue. The assembled structure is comprised of approximately 93 pieces of wood divided amongst 10 for the outside stringer, 8 for the inside stringer, as well as 33 steps and 33 risers.(33 is the age of Our Lord when He died on the Cross.) The perfection of the stringers’ curves is baffling; the wood is spliced along the sides of the stringers and each piece is perfectly curved.



Another mystery of this staircase was the type of wood used. Though the treads have been constantly walked on and were used daily by the sisters and children for over 100 years, nonetheless, only the edges show signs of wear. The wood also appears not to be native to the state of New Mexico, and is in fact, an unknown variety.[3]

When first built, the staircase had no banisters,[4] a feature that would not be added until 7 years later.

Holy Mother Church is always cautious about making statements concerning things of a supernatural nature. Though nothing definite has been said about the stairway, everyone is convinced that this was St. Joseph's answer to prayers. Devotees of Christ's Foster Father do not require the Church's official judgment to understand that the humble, silent, generous and exceptional craftsman was St. Joseph himself.

**St. Joseph, pray for us!**

**May he help us to ascend, through the imitation of the life of Jesus to the choir loft of Our Lady to sing eternally with the angels and the saints the eternal Sanctus to the Trinity!**



#### Footnotes

1. One account tells the work was done very quickly.
2. Three major theories have sought to provide an explanation for the strength of the staircase:
  - the double helix and the weight placed upon it could make it stronger;
  - the inside stringer, being of small diameter could be a load-bearing column;
  - the well-fitted square wooden pegs could create a virtual solid entity.
3. In 1996, after a 15-month study and wood analysis by Forrest N. Easley, a wood technologist for 40 years, it was concluded that the wood of the staircase is of an unknown origin. It is a spruce species but of a subspecies like no other. As stated by Mr. Easley, "No other spruce has square shaped structured cells". It is now named: **Pinacae Picea Josefii Easley**, or as a common name, **Loretto Spruce**.
4. Among the girls who attended the academy at the time the stairway was constructed was a girl of about 13 years. She later became a Loretto Sister, Sister Mary, and she never tired of telling how she and her friend were among the first to climb up the stairway. They were so frightened when they got up to the choir that they came down by crawling down backward or by "bumping down on their bottoms".

## The Miraculous Stairway of Saint Joseph<sup>5</sup>

APR 12, 2008, THE SLAVES OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

A CENTURY AGO, a very remarkable miracle took place in this country, that just now seems to be making the headlines. The people who witnessed it were very excited and jubilant indeed, but surprisingly little mention is made of it in any written form — and then only briefly; to me this is the mystery of the miracle. This miracle, however, is still with us today for you to see, as I did. Perhaps it was meant to be its own witness, to stand the test of time and prove the worth of tradition.

But what is this miracle? It is a beautiful wooden stairway that makes two complete circles as it rises gracefully and uniformly in perfect symmetry. Amazingly, it has no center pole, as every other spiral staircase has, for support. There are no nails or screws in any part of it, nor are there steel plates, angle irons nor anything else but wood and wooden pegs throughout. The curved stringers, which hold the steps, bend in perfect circles as they rise to nearly twenty feet. They are solid boards two inches thick of a variety of fir not native to the place, but claimed by some to be found only in the Holy Land. The steps have been trod upon continuously in the past, yet show little wear.

Carpenters and builders from all over the world are amazed that the whole structure did not collapse the first time someone stepped upon it. But I have seen a picture showing fifteen people walking down them at the same time. Another outstanding

<sup>5</sup> [The Miraculous Stairway of Saint Joseph - Catholicism.org](http://TheMiraculousStairwayofSaintJoseph-Catholicism.org)

fact is that this masterpiece was built by just one man. And witnesses, present at the time of the construction, remarked that the only instruments he used were a hammer, a saw, a T-square, and a few other hand tools, all of which were kept in a small tool chest.

And where is this marvelous stairway? In New Mexico, in the “Royal City of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis of Assisi” commonly called Santa Fe, in a Gothic chapel dedicated to Our Blessed Mother under the title of “Our Lady of Light.” And most important of all, the people of this “City of Holy Faith” have always believed, and assure us even today, that the man who built this Miraculous Stairway was none other than the Prince of Carpenters, Saint Joseph.

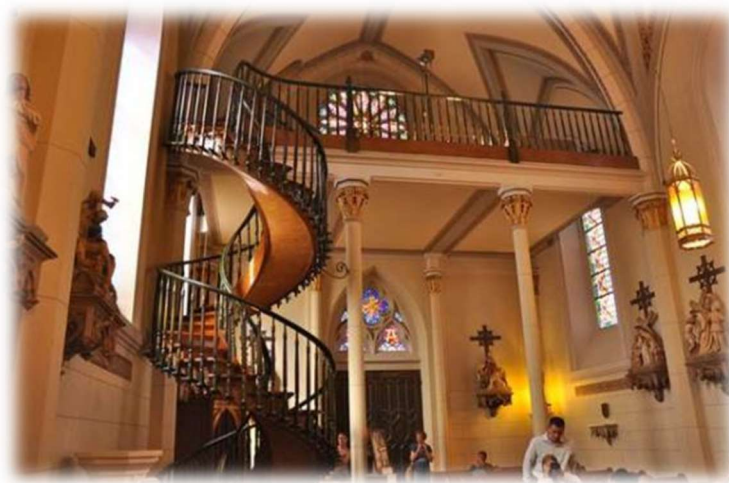
### A Pilgrimage to See It

In 1978 I was fortunate to be among the Brothers who were sent to Santa Fe to distribute this Catholic Quarterly and to visit Our Lady of Light Chapel and to see the Miraculous Stairway. Here in Still River, Massachusetts, we had just finished building our own chapel, which is a wooden structure ninety-two feet long by thirty feet wide. Therefore, having had this experience in carpentry and building, we were anxious not only to see the famous staircase, but also to take in every detail of the entire chapel.

We learned on our visit that the Bishop of Santa Fe at the time the chapel was built was from France. It was his wish to have a chapel modeled after the famous shrine in Paris, *La Sainte Chapelle* built by King Saint Louis. And that is why the Chapel of Our Lady of Light is so clearly like the original. It is a tall and slender stone structure reaching eighty-five feet in height with buttresses evenly spaced against the walls. The red roof is sharply pitched and made of volcanic stone obtained from a nearby quarry. On the inside everything is lightsome, due to the large stained-glass windows. Particularly striking is the beautiful rose window over the choir loft. And rising up to this choir loft is Saint Joseph’s masterpiece. But before we go any further, let us first prepare the way for Saint Joseph’s arrival in Santa Fe by giving a general view of some of the people, the times, and the circumstances which led up to such an outstanding event.

### Setting the Stage

The American flag was raised for the first time over the city of Santa Fe on August 18, 1846, when Major General Stephen Kearny peaceably captured the city from the rule of Mexico. Although the Faith had flourished in New Mexico since the coming of the first missionaries three hundred years ago, the Church at this time was in a sorry state owing to a great lack of priests. The Franciscans had been withdrawn in the 1830s, leaving only a few native priests to administer to thousands of people, and among these were fewer still who remained loyal to their sacred calling.



Then in 1850, in order to solve the problem, Pope Pius IX created the Vicariate of New Mexico, naming as its Vicar Apostolic, Father Jean Baptist Lamy (La-ME) of Covington, Kentucky, who had come originally from France. This action placed all Church affairs of the territory of New Mexico, which at that time included Colorado and Arizona, directly under the jurisdiction of the Holy Father. He was to be their Bishop, and the Bishop-elect, Father Lamy, was to act as his vicar or delegate. Father Lamy was consecrated shortly after, and immediately set out for Santa Fe. An American bishop described him at the time as “a Frenchman, thirty-five years of age, well versed in the doctrine, especially praiseworthy for his mild character and zeal for the

salvation of souls.” Without this zeal for the salvation of souls he most likely would have failed in his assignment of restoring the Church in New Mexico, due to the overwhelming difficulties and dangers that he had to face there. Bishop Lamy himself explains some of these:

“The foremost difficulties of our missions are first the traversing of the immense plains which isolate us from the rest of the United States.... We have to travel three hundred leagues (*a league is usually reckoned to be approximately three miles*) without finding on our way a hut or even a bridge over the rivers, and are always exposed to the arrows of the Indians. Rarely do these savages fail to attack caravans, at times very large ones.”

Yet, in spite of all, this frontier bishop would often travel on horseback over mountains and across deserts with just one



companion, “exposed to the arrows” of such Indians as the fierce Apache, Comanche, or the most fierce Kiowas.

In a report to the “Propagation of the Faith” he relates his pastoral visit into Arizona, which took six months:

“I traveled over a thousand leagues on horseback. In some places we had to sleep under the moon and to travel from twenty to twenty-five leagues without a drop of water, walking to rest my horse. . . . On Christmas Day we were able to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, at which twenty to twenty-five persons assisted kneeling on the ground still covered with snow, which had fallen the day before. We were on a slope of a mountain, surrounded by forests of oak and piñon, silver leaf and cedar trees. . . . At that time there were only two miserable huts. Today you will find this place the capital of Arizona.”

But what fruit was derived from all these hardships? “. . . finding such faithful souls.” He continues, “The ardent faith of our Mexicans, their respect for religion, above all for the Holy Eucharist, their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, is truly admirable. They realize that the priest is the representative of Our Lord Jesus Christ and they render him the greatest veneration. Almost the same can be said of the Catholic Indians”

These faithful people were farmers and shepherds, and, for the most part, they were extremely poor because of the constant depredatory raids of the Indians. Yet, says the Bishop, “As a general thing, our Mexicans have large families and they state with pleasure that the more children they have the richer they are. It is not unusual to meet families of ten, twelve, or more children.” As it appears, the harvest was great indeed and the bishop was always praying and seeking for more priests and missionaries so as to open schools and build more churches; and he assures us that “Divine Providence has blessed in a most visible manner our efforts.”

One visible blessing was his meeting the renowned priest of the Society of Jesus, Father Pierre de Smet, known as “The Blackrobe” to every Indian nation in the Northwest, from Saint Louis to the Pacific. This apostle to the Indians had long been a veteran in the hard ways of the West when the two first met in Saint Louis. Each recognized in the other the same enthusiastic and perhaps reckless spirit of self-sacrifice to save souls, and they became fast friends. Father de Smet proved invaluable not only by his advice, but by taking upon himself all practical business negotiations and transactions of the bishop.

Another notable friend was famous as a soldier and Indian fighter, Christopher (Kit) Carson, a legend of his day. Carson had retired from active service in the Army as a Brigadier General and settled down in Taos, a small town near Santa Fe, where he was baptized a Catholic. On one occasion when a rebellious priest managed to excite the sentiment of the people of his parish against their bishop, Carson, the “Happy Warrior,” was heard to say, “We shall not let them do as they did in 1847 when they murdered and pillaged. I am a man of peace and my motto is: ‘Good will to all’; I hate disturbances among the people, but I can fight a little yet, and I know of no better cause to fight for than my family, my Church, and my friend, the Señor Vicario.”

It also appears that Pope Pius IX was ever watchful for the welfare of Santa Fe, for on his own initiative he gave it the full status of a diocese, confirming Lamy as its Ordinary. Shortly after, the Holy Father presented him with an exquisite chalice taken from the papal treasury. Then, in 1875, he raised the diocese to an archdiocese and sent Lamy the pallium, which is the symbol of an archbishop’s rank. The newly made archbishop, while addressing the people on this occasion exclaimed: “But that the universal Father of the faithful has deigned to cast his eye upon our poor town of Santa Fe, lost in deserts and unknown to the world, is a favor which should arouse our feeling of the most lively gratitude toward the Sovereign Pontiff.”

Yet perhaps the most visible blessing granted by Divine Providence on this archdiocese was the coming of the Sisters of Loretto, for whom Saint Joseph would eventually perform such a unique miracle. Preceding their coming, Bishop Lamy went back East looking for Sisters to teach in his schools. He went to many places but without success. Finally he made a petition to the “Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross” — the first religious institute of American origin. This order was founded by the “Apostle of Kentucky,” Father Charles Nerinx, who incidentally was also responsible for inspiring Father de Smet to come to America.

Sister Richard Marie Barbour, a historian of her forerunners writes:

“Courage typical of the pioneer was in the daughters of Father Nerinx. Therefore, when Bishop Lamy petitioned Mother Berlines Downs, Superior General, for Sisters to aid him in New Mexico, he received a generous response. Bishop Lamy thought it only fair that the Sisters should be warned of the hardships awaiting them, but the picture he drew of conditions in this diocese merely whetted the appetite for self-sacrifice in these noble women.”

Six Sisters were chosen, and they set out bravely on June 27, 1852. If the devil had had his way, they never would have reached their destination, due to the obstacles he placed in their path. One thing is certain: their title, “at the Foot of the

Cross,” is no empty one, for during the next three months they suffered in every imaginable way. Three Sisters fell sick from the cholera and one of these, the superior of the little band, died. Another had to be left behind. Finally, on September 26 the remaining four Sisters made their entry into Santa Fe amid the joyful shouts of the whole town.

Sister Magdalen Hyden was chosen to be the new superior. “Kindness and generosity, traits so much a part of an Irish ancestry, had their living exponent in Mother Magdalen,” wrote Sister Barbour. “Sisters, pupils and priests came to her and left counseled and consoled.” And her successor reports: “Mother Magdalen, a model of regularity and discipline herself, formed a most regular community in Santa Fe.”

During her twenty-nine years in office, ten branch foundations were successfully established from this community — eight in New Mexico, one in Colorado and one in Texas — thus providing thousands of children with a Catholic education. In short, no written word can ever tell the real story of the good accomplished by these dedicated Sisters.

### **Construction of the Chapel**

Most important to our story, however, is that Mother Magdalen was responsible for the construction of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light. Work was begun in 1873 and the chapel was finished and dedicated on April 25, 1878. The Sisters, having saved what they could over the past twenty-one years from tuitions, were able to pay the entire cost of \$30,000. Enthusiastically supporting the whole project was Bishop Lamy, who was often seen on the site serving lunch to the Mexican workers.

The architect was Projectus Mouly, who had come from France with his father, Antoine Mouly, at the Bishop’s request that they design and build his cathedral. Antoine was going blind, money was scarce, and work on the cathedral had come to a halt. Mother Magdalen, therefore, took this opportunity to engage the service of Projectus for the chapel.

Sister Blandina Segale, the notable Sister of Charity who converted one of Billy the Kid’s “tiger desperadoes,” while she was stationed at Santa Fe, knew the young Mouly. Her letters to her superior reveal a fascinating picture of this era, as they are filled with interwoven descriptions and stories of Santa Fe, the Loretine Sisters, and even of Billy the Kid, whom she also tried to convert. But he remained, as she says, “the greatest murderer of the Southwest.” Concerning Projectus Mouly, she writes:

“Dear Sister Justina:

“This Mr. Mouly I speak of is the young artist who so interested me while still in Trinidad. All I knew of him was that he was a highly talented artist, and that he had given up the unprecedented honour for one of his age, not more than seventeen years, the building of a Cathedral and the Chapel of the Sisters of Loretto, because his sensitive, artistic nature would not brook criticism from one who was not capable of drawing a circle on a square, and yet had the power to ‘Lord it over him.’ He withdrew into solitude.”

Sister Blandina was very sympathetic with Mother Magdalen over the loss of the architect, and more than once asked Monsieur Mouly to return to the work, but it was of no avail. Perhaps his leaving explains how plans for a stairway to the choir loft were overlooked. For meanwhile, the work went on without him and it wasn’t until the chapel was almost completed that the omission was discovered.

The Sisters, on first hearing of this, couldn’t understand why it was considered such a problem. Someone then explained that since the choir loft was so high, a conventional staircase would extend far into the chapel, taking up too much room and spoiling the beauty of the interior. The carpenters after much consideration came up with a drastic solution. “There is nothing else to do,” they said, “but rip down the loft and rebuild it considerably lower.” But the Sisters would not hear of such a thing. From the very beginning of its construction, the chapel had been placed under the care of Saint Joseph “in whose honor we communicated every Wednesday (*Wednesday is dedicated by the Church to Saint Joseph*) that he might assist us,” wrote Mother Magdalen. She then adds, “Of his powerful help we have been witnesses on several occasions.” So immediately they began a Novena to their heavenly patron. Perhaps they promised to name their next school in his honor, for the records show that in 1879, one year after the dedication of the chapel, they founded “Saint Joseph’s School” in Taos.

The reports of Saint Joseph’s actual arrival and building of the spiral staircase have come down to us [through tradition](#), which Sister Barbour assures us began at the same time as the event. There are a few particular details that vary, but generally the accounts run along the same lines.

All agree that on the last day of the Novena a gray-haired man leading a donkey bearing a tool chest arrived at the convent gate and asked to see the superior. He explained to Mother Magdalen that he was a carpenter by trade, and would like to



volunteer his services in building the much needed staircase. She was only too eager to accept his offer, but failed to ask his name or where he was from. Going to the chapel, he pointed out where he could make a set of stairs, and how they would be built so as not to take up much space. Having done this, he diligently set to work.

Some say that he completed the staircase overnight. But according to the Sisters present at the time, it took considerably longer. They recalled seeing tubs of water with wood soaking in them. This would explain how the wood was bent and adds to the probability that the actual building time took several months. It is also from the Sisters that we learn that the very simplest of tools were used.

During my visit to Santa Fe I happened to meet Mrs. Deolinda Marie Montoya, who is not only a native of the city but also a graduate of the school opened by Mother Magdalen. Here is the account as she and many others know it today:

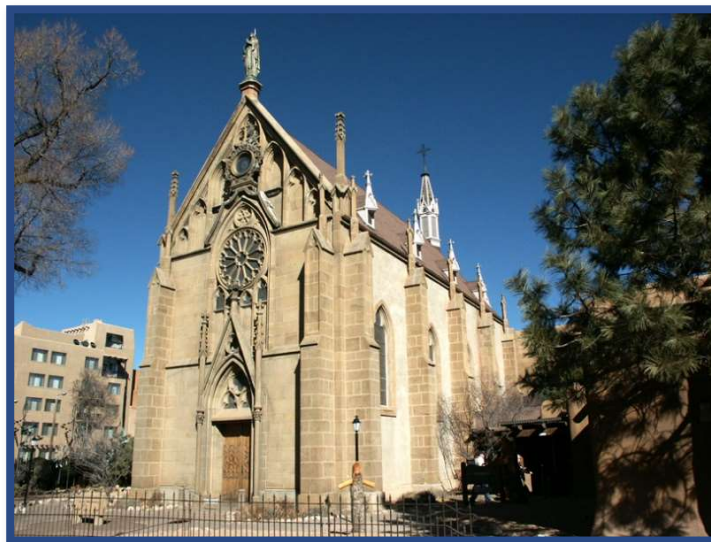
“I was fortunate to go to Mass every day for four years while I was in high school at Loretto Academy for girls. The famous staircase did not have a rail at the time, but one was added later for safety. To help preserve the stairs, we were allowed to go up to the choir loft only one at a time.

“An old, old legend tells how the stairway was built. The architect was unable to make steps that would not take up all of the chapel. It is said that several architects tried their hand at it, but could not come to a solution of the problem. The choir loft was without stairs for many years. I understand that Mother Superior was approached by an elderly man who said he could build a stairway within a reasonable area. A Novena to Saint Joseph had been started before this man approached them. No one had ever seen this man before. But it is said he used no nails, just wooden pegs, to hold the stairs together and that the job was completed overnight. When the job was completed, Mother Superior looked all over for the carpenter and asked if anyone knew him. The answer was, ‘No.’ So, the legend is that Saint Joseph himself built them. I myself have marveled at the way they are made, and I do believe Saint Joseph built them. Since the stairs went up, the people in Santa Fe, which is a city of Faith, have believed to this present day that Saint Joseph made them. This is the way it was told to me by my grandmother.”

From this account we can see today that the lively faith of the people of Santa Fe of Mexican descent has remained unchanged since the time Our Lady appeared at Guadalupe in Mexico in 1531. And many of the Sisters of Loretto have also believed that Saint Joseph himself built these stairs. And why not? Does not the unknown carpenter fit the description of the Saint Joseph we know from Holy Scripture and tradition? He came to Santa Fe as he lived on earth two thousand years ago, a silent stranger known only as a carpenter. It wasn't until he was gone that he was recognized as Saint Joseph, a “son of David” and, therefore, a king, the chaste spouse of the Blessed Virgin and foster father of Our Lord.

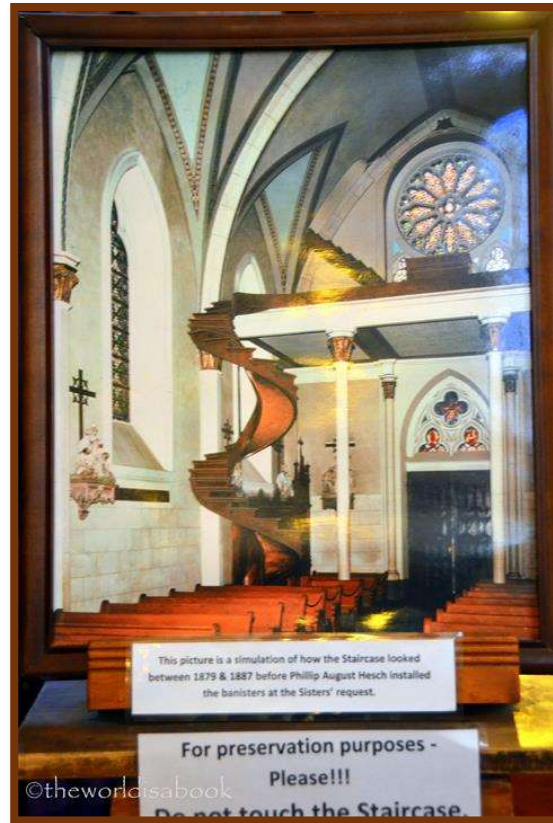
Today, then, let us not fail to recognize him as our patron and intercessor in his unchanged position as “Head of the Holy Family.” Have you a need? “Go to Joseph” as the Sisters of Loretto did, and see what happens!

**POSTSCRIPT:** Unfortunately, Novus Ordoism also ravaged this chapel for it is now **a local museum** and a wedding chapel only.



The Loretto Chapel, Sta. Fe, New Mexico<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>By Camerafiend, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3455704>



The Original Staircase

### What The Debunkers and Rebutters Say About The Staircase That Defies Gravity:

In the early 2000s, amateur historian Mary Jean Cook **theorized** that the probable builder of the staircase was François-Jean "Frank" or "Frenchy" Rochas (1843–1894), a reclusive rancher and occasional carpenter who came to New Mexico from France around the 1870s. A key piece of evidence was a short article in the Santa Fe New Mexican describing his death by **murder in 1895**, which noted:

"He was a Frenchman, and was favorably known in Santa Fe as an expert worker in wood. He build [sic] the handsome staircase in the Loretto chapel and at St. Vincent sanitarium."

Cook also found an entry in the Sisters' logbook stating that Rochas had been paid US\$150 (equivalent to \$4,212 in 2021) for "wood" in 1881, confirming that he had done some type of carpentry work for them. At the time of his death, Rochas reportedly owned an extensive set of carpentry tools including: "five saws, a saw clamp and set, nine planes, nineteen moulding planes, two squares, five gauges, six chisels, two gouges, a draw knife, a brace, three augers, ten auger bits, a reamer, two clamps, and a pair of trammel points (for drawing large circles)"

**Others have disputed Cook's theory.** Writer John Clark stated that the memo in the logbook read "**Paid for wood** — Mr. Rochas for N. School" and contends this **refers to a nearby school the sisters hired him to build**, and that the logbook makes **no mention** of a staircase.<sup>7</sup>

#### SIMILAR STAIRS<sup>7</sup>

Although the design of the Loretto stairs is highly unusual, other spiral staircases without center supports are known to exist. One example can be found at the Old Washoe Club in Virginia City, Nevada, which also dates to the 1870s. This staircase was described by *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* as "the longest of its kind without a supporting pole", although **it has fewer** turns than the Loretto staircase.

Further afield, another staircase is in the Gdańsk Town Hall in Poland, which was reported to the *New Mexican* in 1944 by a government official named Bonnie Foster. The paper wrote: "It is tall, spiral, and without steel nails, but **the wood is different**. It is in the town hall, of the 14th to the 16th century. How it was constructed, and whether there is a miracle story back of it, Mrs. Foster could not say. But she declared it is **strikingly like St. Joseph's in design**."

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loretto\\_Chapel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loretto_Chapel)





Spiral stairs of Gdańsk Town Hall  
have no photos to look at.

#### Ed's Notes:

The story about the Frenchman Rochas is proof positive that **he did not build** the Loreto Staircase. Knowing human nature and sensationalism, he would have **claimed it right after finishing it and made more money**. But he did not! Also, **he was killed!** Maybe, after making his false claim, he was ready to tell the truth and his co-conspirators did him!

St. Augustine said that whatever you received from God, Who wills everything, **you deserve**. Making a miraculous staircase then being killed? Something is wrong here about this poor soul. There were no similar staircases built in New Mexico nor in any other parts of the world after the Loreto Staircase except the Nevada one.

Another thing to consider is the question, "Did the nuns concoct the story, i.e. **lied** about the origin of the staircase?" A lie is a lie, sometime in the future the lie will be exposed by someone in the inner circle of the nuns. No one from the inner circle ever did.

By the way, the Gdańsk staircase seem to have a **center pole**. Looking at the picture of the **original St. Joseph Loreto Staircase**, you could see how miraculous it is. **It is standing by itself!** Also, a reminder that St. Joseph's Loreto Staircase's wood **could not be found anywhere that is why they gave the wood a new name**.

The one in Virginia City, Nevada we could not make comment on for now for we

Scoffers, debunkers, skeptics pride themselves in proving **truth, false and false, truth**. Their fate they themselves sealed by their pride. Do not be like them. God condemns these people: "**A false witness shall not be unpunished: and he that speaketh lies, shall perish.**" (Proverbs 19:9)<sup>8</sup>

If you do not understand or could figure out what you are seeing or reading, pray to God for guidance, if it is that important. Trust in God and He will show you the truth. Personal experience has shown it to be true. Persevere in your trust in Him and will lead you on the right path. **Whatever He promised He keeps!**

He, Himself assures us: "**Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. [6] In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps. Be not wise in thy own conceit: fear God, and depart from evil: For it shall be health to thy navel, and moistening to thy bones.**" (Proverbs 3:5-8)

*Merry Christmas and A Blessed New Year to All*

<sup>8</sup> All bible verses from Douay Rheims Catholic Bible, Rev. 1752 [www.drbo.org](http://www.drbo.org)