

Homily at Vespers of the Blessed Mother
Ceremonies for the Opening of the Cause
of the Beatification and Canonization of Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey
January 21, 2011 – Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Most Reverend Robert W. Finn
Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Your Excellencies,
Brother Priests and Deacons
Esteemed Religious,

Particularly Members of the Vincentian Congregation and Daughters of Charity
Family Members of Sr. Marie
Friends in Christ all,

The Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich retold her mystical experiences of the life of the Blessed Virgin, describing in astounding detail the little stone house which overlooked the Bay at Ephesus. These accounts stirred the heart of Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey, who already loved our Blessed Mother deeply. Sr. Marie prevailed over the skepticism of her Vincentian co-workers, persuading the scholarly priests to scour the hot dusty slopes of Nightingale Mountain. Mary herself, it seemed, refreshed the seekers in the cool waters of a spring God had first provided for the Mother of Jesus and St. John the Evangelist.

Fathers Poulin and Jung were compelled by the sincerity and humility of Sr. Marie, the holiness they saw in her and which draws us together tonight in this unlikely place to ask God's grace and blessing on a new journey: the study of Sr. Marie's life and work.

Adelle Louise Marie de Mandat-Grancey, as a young lady, determined to leave the world and the family she loved dearly. She wanted to be among the simple maids she had observed in the streets of Paris, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul. At Rue du Bac, where Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal had appeared to Catherine Laboure, she was formed more fully in the humility and generous faith that was, early on, a hallmark of her life. Near Paris she cared for orphans. She gathered youth in the

catechesis of the Children of Mary. When the need was great she went to Turkey, and in time, was pressed into service as Superior.

When God had prepared her, He acquired her will and her heart so that the gift of *Meryem Ana Evi*, Mary's House, could be revealed to the world. Sr. Marie acquired the property with the help of her family, and she and her Vincentian spiritual fathers carried forward the excavations and restorations. They prayed there and walked the path of the Cross which was once traversed by the Lady of Sorrows herself. Today it is visited by Popes, and it is the place of prayer and devotion to millions of children of Mary each year: Christians and Muslims together. They adorn its walkways with their petitions to the Mother of God, Theotokos, and to the Lady of the Koran.

In the humility characteristic of her Order, it seems that the foundress of Mary's House, never published a book or signed her name to any teaching, but her spirit of prayer and courageous determination endures nearly a century after her death. After world wars, and cultural and political upheavals in Turkey, admiration for this strong holy woman, Sr. Marie, has persisted.

Half a world away, in Kansas City, Missouri, we also have heard her story, and now we seek to fulfill the mandate of the Church and to satisfy the hunger of God's people for saintly models and friends in every age and place.

Our Evening Prayer is a song to God in honor of Mary. In the fullness of time she bore the Savior. At the foot of Jesus' Cross she became our Mother. Under the care of John, she lived her last years on earth in the little stone house near Ephesus. There the Virgin Mother received the Eucharist from the apostle's hands. Her daily devotion was the *Via Crucis* which, according to Anne Catherine Emmerich, she marked on the hill beyond the house. Along that path she would finally be carried by the apostles, laid lovingly in a tomb corresponding to the sepulcher of Jerusalem, only to be assumed body and soul into heaven and crowned before the Most Holy Trinity.

Three years ago, I too knelt in that holy place and felt I had arrived at our Mother's home. On that same trip I went to nearby Izmir, and visited with His Excellency Archbishop Ruggero Franceschini. I could see his love for Smyrna, and for the ancient Basilicas in Ephesus where more than 1500 years before the bishops of the Church affirmed definitively the profession of the faithful who kept a torch lit vigil in the streets and made the great proclamation of the Council of Ephesus: Holy Mary Mother of God, Theotokos!

Archbishop Franceschini, carrying the cultural challenges and political turmoil part and parcel of his historic See, expressed deep affection for the holy house and admiration for its founder, Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey. Two years later he would ask me to take the Cause in his stead, a request that was hard to refuse when requested by his good predecessor and envoy, Archbishop Bernardini. Let us offer fervent prayers for Archbishop Franceschini and the Church in Turkey. While I accept this privilege on behalf of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, I pledge that if God's will unfolds in accord with our prayer and work – we will, in a sense, give Sr. Marie back, not only to France, or to Turkey, or to the United States, but to the world, as a friend and intercessor.

It is a joy and honor for me, and I know also for Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City Kansas, and Bishop Raymond Boland, Emeritus of this diocese, to pray in this sanctuary with the Archbishop Emeritus of Izmir, His Excellency Archbishop Giuseppe Bernardini, who himself has done so much to shepherd this effort.

Tante Grazie e Benvenuto Monsignore Bernardini!

We also wish to welcome Mrs. Madelaine Kunz, the associate and representative of Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, whose nomination as postulator has been confirmed by the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and whose reputation as a brilliant and dedicated churchman is well established by his work on so many such Processes. Welcome Madelaine. Please assure Dr. Ambrosi of our prayers and esteem.

Today we are also honored and happy to have among us some of the family of Sr. Marie de Mandat-Grancey. Baron and Baroness Jacques and Rosario de Mandat-Grancey, Baron Philippe de Mandat-Grancey, and Sister Elisabeth.

Chère famille de Soeur Marie. Merci d'être venus. Que Dieu vous bénisse, vous et vos familles.

This week I have received a letter from the head of the De Grancey family. Unable to be with us, Count Adrien de Mandat-Grancey offered his prayerful support in our effort. "Concerning our eldest branch," he writes, "and all those of the family who will not be able to [come] to Kansas City, we will organize a collective prayer and Mass in the Holy Chapel of Rue du Bac, on the very same day you begin the ceremonies in Kansas City! Our joined prayers will be going simultaneously to the Lord from two continents!"

From the homeplace of Sr Marie I have received other messages of support: from His Excellency Roland Minnerath Archbishop of Dijon; from Sr. Evelyne Franc, Superior General of the daughters of Charity. From France, and from Turkey, and from the heart of the United States we are joined in prayer for this blessed commission.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank one of the many who have worked so hard to spread the story of God's providence through the example of Sr. Marie. I welcome Mrs. Erin Von Uffel who first introduced me to the holy Servant of God. To Erin, and her steady co-worker Lorraine Fusaro, welcome, and we are grateful for your zeal and your faith. I made that first trip with members of the family of George B. Quatman, founder of the American Society of Ephesus. Bill Quatman and Georgia Quatman Lynch continue to do so much to support and promote the holy sites, and are a great blessing to our Diocese.

It is a joy to greet the Daughters of Charity who have come today. You and our other Religious – there are so many here tonight - have yet another beautiful example in Sr. Marie. And I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the presence of our Vincentian

priests who have long served in our Diocese; particular greetings to Vincentian Fr. Carl Schulte who is a biographer of Sr. Marie. Thank you Father, for your very important contribution.

In the Ceremony following Vespers, I will call forward and receive the oath of the Tribunal assigned to conduct this Process and the various commission members and assistants who will carry forward this important work. Thank you all, in advance, for your generous service. What you do will bring many significant graces to our Diocese.

Dear friends, the Evening Prayer of the Church echoes the Song of Mary and resonates in every place and time. May God receive our prayer tonight, confirm what we do, and bring it to completion in conformity with His holy will. Holy Mary – Mother of God and our hope: Pray for us!