

Tonight at 6:45 in Sacred
Heart Church -- Novena to
the Sorrowful Mother.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
May 6, 1955

Sunday is Mother's Day. Re-
member her with your Mass
and Communion

The Weeping Madonna Of Sicily

In March of 1953, Gracia Januso of Syracuse, Sicily, went shopping for a wedding present. Her brother Angelo, was marrying Antonina Giusto. Gracia selected an image of the Blessed Virgin. It was a varnished, plaster figure in half-relief -- rather pretty, but strictly a factory product; there are thousands like it throughout Italy. Our Lady had a flaming heart and a sad look. She wore a blue veil and mantle.

The couple was married, and they moved into a small house on the Via degli Orti. Gracia and an aunt moved in with them. The statue of the Blessed Virgin was hung on a wall over a bed. It probably received little or no veneration from the newly-weds. Antonina was not very pious, and Angelo was a Communist.

Antonina became pregnant, and complications set in. She became partially paralyzed, was forced to lie idle for days, and found herself looking up at the statue for hours at a time. Almost without knowing it, she began to talk to the statue. Angelo, her Communist husband, became furious with her and threatened to break the statue.

By the morning of August 29, Antonina's suffering had become almost unbearable. She looked up at the little statue and saw tears coming from its eyes. Her pain stopped and the paralysis disappeared. At the same time, Our Lady communicated a message to Antonina. There was no voice -- the message came, Antonina recalls, as though someone were speaking inside of her. She was given to understand:

- 1) That her paralysis would end immediately; that her pains would not return; and that she would have a normal childbirth.
- 2) That her child would be born on Christmas Day.
- 3) That a church, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, should be built on the spot.

The news spread through the neighborhood, and many people flocked to the spot. When Angelo came home from work and saw the crowd, he thought his wife had died. When told about the statue and the tears, he became furious and rushed in to smash the statue -- but he, too, felt the tears when he picked it up, and put it back on the wall. Later, it was hung on an outside wall for the benefit of pilgrims. The tears continued until 11:30 a.m., on September 1.

The Archbishop appointed a group of chemists to study the phenomenon. They reported the tears were the same composition as human tears. Then the Catholic bishops of Sicily issued a statement, declaring they unanimously agreed there can be no doubt of the reality of the weeping. Indeed, the statue wept twice on the very day of their proclamation (December 12, 1953). The Osservatore Romano, official Vatican City daily, printed the bishop's statement without comment.

On December 25, 1953, Antonina gave birth to her child in a perfectly normal delivery. She had no more pains after August 29, and her paralysis never returned. As yet, her husband, Angelo, has not left the Communist party. The statue is now on a high marble column in a public square in Syracuse. Physical cures have been reported; the spiritual effects of this latest appeal for devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary have been even more remarkable.

Tomorrow is the First Saturday of the Month, the day especially devoted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary -- the same devotion revealed earlier at Fatima.