

Turn to Our Lady of Consolation



Something happened the other day that almost never happens: My husband and I took a little road trip together – just us! No kids meant no perpetual playing of a Disney soundtrack, no perpetual dispensations of snacks, and no perpetual stretching for “previously cast-off but suddenly must-have” toys, books or sippy cups. I love our two little treasures, but in case you can’t tell, it was pretty nice.

So what did we do? We did some recon for a book I am finishing up, took a selfie at the sign entering Waldo Township (my addition to the itinerary), visited the tomb of American president Warren G. Harding (his addition to the itinerary), ate delicious German food, and, of course, made a pilgrimage to the nearby Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation.

Since you probably don’t want to hear about how we found Waldo (sorry, couldn’t help it), I’ll focus on the beautiful shrine, which is a hidden gem in the small village of Carey, Ohio. In her book [“Monuments, Marvels and Miracles: A Traveler’s Guide to Catholic America,”](#) Marion Amberg tells of the miraculous event attributed to the shrine’s fame. She writes: “On May 24, 1875, when a statue of Our Lady of Consolation was being carried in a seven-mile procession from St. Nicholas Church in Frenchtown to a new church in Carey, the pouring rain parted like the Red Sea. Rain fell on all sides, but not one drop fell on Our Lady or anyone in the procession.”

The magnificent Byzantine-style structure houses the Our Lady of Consolation Statue in the right side altar, and pilgrims flock there, seeking the intercession of Mary, consolor of the

afflicted. The opposite side altar is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, and there are numerous niches with additional statues and other pieces of art. The lower-level houses another sanctuary that includes an altar dedicated to the souls of the faithful departed, several other statues and a chapel of holy relics. Also on the lower level are display cases filled with tokens of favors answered, including rows of wooden crutches, photographs, notes and ultrasound images. They are the prayers of thanksgiving from people who credit the intercession of Our Lady of Consolation with their healing, recovery and wholeness.

“Since 1875, Mary, the Mother of God, has manifested herself as a most loving Mother to the thousands of the devoted pilgrims at this shrine,” the shrine’s website explains. “Through her prayers, the sick and afflicted have found health, comfort and consolation.”

While attending Mass in this sacred space, it occurred to me that a devotion to Our Lady of Consolation – to our tender mother who is there to soothe us in times of trial – is just what our suffering world needs in 2021. We need to return to our mother, who knows our pain. She waits for us, with a heart full of love and a desire to bring us to Jesus, the healer of all ills.

A book for pilgrims recommends a prayer to offer at the altar of the Blessed Mother, but it’s a prayer that would work very well at home, too. It reads, in part: “I bring you my own very special needs and intentions, Mary, those areas of my life which trouble me, cause me pain and hurt. Dear Mother of Consolation, pray for me please. I know that you are my loving Mother, filled with compassion for your child.”

In times of pandemic, violence and division, there is so much we are unable to control. What a gift it is that we can place all of our worries at the feet of the mother who seeks only to console our troubled hearts and bring us to her son.

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