

*A tribute to John Haffert...from the archives of the Oureana-Fatima Historical Cultural Foundation,
(Founded in Ourem-Fatima, Portugal by John M. Haffert in 1995)*

A great man has died (10/31/01)...the co-founder of the greatest Fatima apostolic movement in the world! He recently revealed to us that when he began lecturing on the importance of the Rosary and the Scapular, the little time he could find between his many activities for sleep, he did so in his 1930 Nash automobile, which he himself fashioned with removable seats so that he could rest more comfortably, given his great height.

Few people also know that during World War II, John Haffert dedicated himself "with greater intensity to the spiritual apostolate for men in the armed services." So concerned was he for the welfare of their souls, that he distributed hundreds of thousands of Scapulars at his own expense to these fighting men in the battlefields of Europe and Asia. He said that "through this experience, we became more and more aware of the trauma many soldiers experienced in killing the enemy."

Near the end of the Second World War, John wrote a book titled, *The Peacemaker Who Went To War*. The book was to be the first English biography of Dom Nuno Alvarez Pereira, the Holy Constable or Commander-in-Chief of Portugal who, like John, was the great lay Carmelite apostle who spread the love and devotion of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the darkest time of war.

Nuno, who became his life-long hero and patron, had been beatified in 1918 during the First World War, to serve as a model for soldiers who go to war, when there seems to be no other way to obtain peace. In this book, which rapidly became a best-seller, Mr. Haffert also presented Blessed Nuno in his lesser known role: "as precursor of Fatima and father of the Scapular devotion and Carmelite order in Portugal."

The success of this 1945 book, together with the success of *Scapular* magazine which John Haffert had founded that same year, prompted the Reverend Luis Gonzaga de Oliveira, the Carmelite Superior who was the Portuguese Custodian of Blessed Nuno's relics in Lisbon, to invite him to come to Portugal to know Nuno better, as well as the message of Our Lady of Fatima.

In 1946, Father Oliveira scheduled an audience with the Bishop of Leiria, Dom Jose Alves Correia da Silva, who upon meeting John, believed he had found the right person...a Catholic journalist, to transmit the message of Our Lady of Fatima to the entire world.

The Bishop immediately made it possible for John to meet Sister Lucia, the surviving Fatima Seer, face to face. John took with him a letter signed by Bishop Don Jose, which read: "You are to receive this gentleman as if it were the Bishop himself."

In that first meeting with Sister Lucia, John Haffert was overwhelmed by the humility she possessed. John revealed to me that, in the Visitors Room where he awaited the audience, he saw a young nun enter the room to prepare some armchairs for the meeting. When another sister entered the room and sat in one of the armchairs, inviting John to take the chair opposite, he believed this to be the Fatima Seer and told her how honored he was to greet her. But, to his surprise, she was not.

Sister Lucia was the nun who had been in the room dusting and arranging the chairs and who was now seated on a rugged bench in the corner of the room waiting for the questions to be asked of her. John Haffert immediately got up and insisted that Lucia sit in his place, and he himself took the rugged bench in the corner.

In the same year, 1946, Pope Pio XII sent a Pontifical Papal Legate to crown the image of Our Lady of Fatima as Queen of the World. It was on this great day, May 13th, 1946, that John Haffert arrived in Fatima to attend the celebrations for the first time. It was also the 300th anniversary of the coronation of Our Lady of Conception as Queen of Portugal by King John IV, direct descendant of Blessed Nuno.

It was that day that the Bishop of Leiria, Dom Jose Alves Correia da Silva, revealed to John that he believed that it was Blessed Nuno, who in Heaven, had asked Our Lady to come to Fatima in Portugal, since it seemed that God was going to send Her somewhere in the world to reveal Her message. Perhaps it was Divine Providence that, only the day before John Haffert had arrived in Fatima, the Bishop of Leiria had received an important relic of Blessed Nuno offered by Dona Olga, Marquess of Cadaval, a close friend of Sister Lucia, whose husband was directly descended from Blessed Nuno, and she herself was an Italian Princess who was a great devotee of Fatima, and among the first Servite nurses of the Shrine.

There developed between John Haffert and the Bishop of Leiria a great friendship that rapidly grew the following years. John was asked his opinion on the construction of the Fatima Basilica and other construction being developed in Fatima.

In a joint idea to bring the message of Fatima to the four corners of the world, Bishop Venancio and John Haffert developed the idea of sending a Pilgrim Virgin image, a statue which would travel the world with the message of Peace. Few know it was John Haffert who ordered the first image from the master artist Jose Ferreira Thedim sculpted in 1946, paying him double the price he charged, in order to be certain that it would be the closest representation of the Mother of God, ever made on the face of the earth...and according to Sister Lucia, it was.

That year, two twin images, carved by the artist at John Haffert's request, left Portugal to travel the world working miracles among the peoples they saw, and being acclaimed by many as: Our Lady, Queen of the World.

During more than 50 years, John Haffert sponsored Pilgrim Virgin Peace Flights which took the image of Our Lady of Fatima to many countries of the world and finally to Russia after the collapse of the Communist Empire, seen as a direct result of the Consecration made by the Pope in 1984. John Haffert was the first person to recognize the Consecration as valid, even before Sr. Lucia had pronounced its validity publicly. John was, in fact, the first person to collect signatures for the Consecration of Russia, one of which was personally signed by Sr. Lucia in the early 1970's.

Such was the admiration that Pope Pius XII had for John, that he gave him his own skull-cap, the symbol of papal recognition of what he had accomplished for Fatima already back then.

John met Monsignor Harold Colgan, who had listened to John speak and had himself founded a Marian movement. It was after he once asked the members of his parish to bring something blue in honor of Mary to Mass on Sunday. When his entire congregation arrived dressed in blue, Msgr. Colgan declared: "Good Lord, we have a Blue Army!"...and, indeed, it was, for it became an increasingly powerful movement which would spiritually fight against the atheist forces of the Red Army of Moscow.

The appeal of the message of Fatima during the Cold War and the threat of an atomic war helped the Blue Army grow rapidly. The various national Blue Army centers founded shortly after in many countries, joined in the World Apostolate of Fatima, which elected as its President the Bishop of Fatima, Dom John Pereira Venancio. Special delegate and protector of the movement, nominated by Pius XII, was Eugene Cardinal Tisserant. In this way, the Blue Army helped form new leaders who worked for world peace.

Among its members who rose to occupy places of power and influences in the world of International politics are counted: German Chancellor, Konrad Adanuer; the President of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino; the President of United States, John F. Kennedy; and the President of Italy, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

Even the Portuguese President, Antonio Oliveira Salazar, enlisted as a member of the Blue Army of Portugal, having had conferred upon him by John Haffert, on behalf of the Apostolate, the "Blue Army Peace Prize." Millions of people have enlisted in the Blue Army making it the greatest Fatima apostolic movement in the Church.

The friendship which developed between John Haffert and Bishop Dom Jose Alves Correia da Silva spread to his auxiliary Bishop, Dom John Pereira Venancio, who succeeded the first Bishop in the See of Leiria, today Leiria-Fatima. From this new and keen friendship, there developed the creation of the International Headquarters of the Apostolic Movement of Fatima in the Cova De Iria, known today as *Domus Pacis: House of Peace*.

Few people know that the idea for this house was first developed as a seminary to train an army of priests in the Byzantine Rite to go and evangelize Russia as soon as Communism collapsed, but the idea was dropped and the house turned into a retreat and formation center for Apostolate members.

Such was the confidence deposited in John M. Haffert by the Portuguese Government and Clergy, that in 1957 when the Holy See requested that the Bishop of Leiria send the envelope with the Third Secret to Rome, it was John who was chosen by the Portuguese Bishops to request that Bishop da Silva not let the envelope leave Portugal without letting them know the contents.

John confirmed the fact recently, that he did embarrassingly ask Bishop da Silva at a meeting to open the envelope and reveal the secret, and it was the only time he had even seen "Our Lady's Bishop" seem displeased. The Bishop answered: "If it is a secret, then it must remain a secret!"

Another member of the Blue Army who also became a spiritual father of the Apostolate, thanks to John, was Blessed Padre Pio, who received John and the Pilgrim Virgin when he was gravely ill, and was miraculously cured at that time. He prophesied that Russia would be converted when enough Blue Army members fulfilled their pledge for all of the Communists in Russia.

Another miracle witnessed by John Haffert personally, was that of Arminda De Jesus Cam-pos which occurred in Fatima on October 13th, 1946. It is, till this day, considered the greatest miracle ever worked by the direct intervention of Our Lady at Fatima.

Arminda, who had been paralyzed for many years, was cured instantaneously. John was among the many journalists there who witnessed the open fissures and wounds heal up instantaneously during the blessing of the sick, and heard the bones crack as the cure occurred.

Alexandrina of Balazar and Sister Lucia both prophesied that Arminda would one day again be paralyzed and bedridden, but she would become one of three mystic souls who would be a light to the world in the darkest time.

After Pius XII met Arminda in a private audience in Rome, she joined the Order of Our Lady of Loreto, and soon after, she suffered a fall leaving her once again completely paralyzed. John and Arminda became close friends, and it was to Arminda's prayers (and those of John's sister and the many devoted Blue Army members) that John attributed the great success of the Blue Army, during these more than 50 years.

In the 1960s, the Church was undergoing radical changes. John Haffert, who defined the role of the laity in today's Church, read his speech before the assembled Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council. To the fascination of all the Bishops, he read it in fluent Latin! (John was fluent in both reading and writing six languages.)

In his opinion, the Fatima message was also in need of new technological and radical means to diffuse its timeless message. In the following years, John Haffert wrote dozens of widely selling books, founded the color magazines, *SOUL* and *Voice of the Sacred Hearts*, the latter Apostolate of which he also helped found.

Already in 1959, he hosted the popular TV show, *Count Down—1960*, which had on the show surviving witnesses of the Miracle of the Sun of 1917 whom John had tracked down, and special guest John F. Kennedy. John Haffert also produced a 13 part TV series called *Hope For The World In The Secret Of Fatima*, to answer many questions about the Fatima message.

John Haffert also requested the artist Salvador Dali to paint the vision of Hell at Fatima. He convinced the famous painter to accept the job for the Blue Army at half the cost for the full height of Dali's walking stick, which would have cost double. According to Canon Galamba de Olveira of the Leiria Diocese, John's idea may have influenced Dali positively, since the artist came to Fatima shortly before dying and confessed his life's sins to the same Canon Galamba, who assured John that Dali had converted.

John Haffert also realized his dream of producing a film on Fatima with a title "State of Emergency," the lead role having been played by actor, Martin Sheen. It was based on Nuclear Scientist Dr. J. Rand McNally's actual findings and theory that there exists a strong possibility that one very high-powered nuclear explosion could ignite another, and another, etc., causing a ripple effect of multiple nuclear explosions throughout the world. John felt that it was imperative to bring this serious possibility of major world-destruction to light.

One of John's most successful ideas to bring the peoples of America to know the message of Fatima was "Fatima Travel," the largest pilgrimage organizer of all time, which owned its own Boeing planes, named in honor of the "Queen of the World." Seeing that there were hardly any hotels in Fatima, and most foreigners had to stay in Lisbon and come to Fatima on day trips, spending only five to six hours in Fatima, John had the idea to create a luncheon during which the Message of Fatima in the context of Portuguese history could be transmitted.

At his own expense, John purchased several buildings in Ourem Castle near Fatima, and converted one of them into the Medieval Banquet Hall. It brought new life to the Castle of Blessed Nuno...the Castle which Pope Paul VI called the Castle of the Queen of the World. Even today, visitors hear the message of Fatima narrated by the voice of John Haffert, thirty years after the founding of the Medieval program...which has now been seen by over 2 million visitors.

In the 1970s, John Haffert led another campaign, this time to rescue the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan, Mother and Queen of Russia. Millions of dollars were raised, thanks to the efforts of John. Today, after many years in Fatima, the Icon is in the Private Chapel of the Holy Father in the Vatican, awaiting its return to Russia by the Holy Father...thus serving as a possibly important instrument for Christian Unity.

John Haffert's last creation was the Oureana-Fatima Historical Cultural Foundation in Ourem Castle, home of the *Sedes Mundi Reginae* "Queen of the World Marian Museum Center." John recently confessed that he always felt especially moved to promoting the Queen of the World title that Pius XII had given the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima in 1946.

The Oureana-Fatima Foundation has the great responsibility of presenting this message in a permanent way to the entire world as a legacy to John. Two great Americans, Jimmy Williamson and Helen Bergkamp, were inspired by John to help create the Marian Museum, the Queen of the World Park, the Marian Library and Research Center, and the International Relic Shrine, all now open to the public.

We have already begun our most recent project: the John Haffert Memorial Pilgrim Virgin Museum, which will tell John's story and that of the Pilgrim Virgin, a "love affair of more than 50 years." The President of the Foundation is today Dom Duarte, the Duke of Braganza, heir to the Portuguese Throne and direct descendant of Blessed Nuno (who lived in this castle) and King John IV, who in 1646 crowned Our Lady, Queen of Portugal.

In 1996, John Haffert was recognized as the Pioneer of International Pilgrimages to Fatima and received from Ourem-Fatima City Hall a much-deserved tribute. At the same time, San-tarem City Hall and the Shrine of the Most Holy Miracle of Santarem gave him the Key to the City of Santarem, only once surrendered to the first King of Portugal by the Moors in 1147.

The Portuguese Ministry of Tourism, which also recognized John's great role in religious tourism to Fatima, awarded him a great honor. He was, according to the Ministry, the person who most brought or inspired pilgrims to visit Fatima in the history of the apparition grounds. They calculated more than 30 million people had come to Fatima through his inspiration since 1946.

In his second-last visit to Fatima, on May 13, 1999, we were privileged to be with John and Pat at a meeting with Sister Lucia on occasion of her 50th anniversary in Carmel. John visited Portugal for the last time in May of 2000, to be present with the Pope at the Beatification of Blessed Jacinta and Francisco Marto. Tears came to our eyes when several Swiss and Italian Blue Army members carrying flags in the pro-cession, upon seeing John in the VIP colonnade broke ranks to come and embrace him, placing their heads at his breast and lovingly calling him the Father of the Blue Army, and to his surprise asking that he bless them.

On that afternoon of May 13, 2000, he saw the blessing of the new building for the Marian Museum and Relic Shrine. Present with him were his dear wife and long-time friends, Am-bassador Howard Dee, Father Edgardo Arellano, Patricia Conatty, and Helen Bergkamp.

In the spread of the Fatima message, John met and served with love, loyalty, and dedication five Popes, and four Bishops of Fatima. He also served various Bishops worldwide, his closest collaborators: Bishops Sheen, Ahr, Luna, Hastrich, and Ito, the latter whom he helped in the spread of the Messages of Akita, Japan.

One of the last visits John received at his home, was that of His Royal Highness Prince Dom Duarte, heir to the Portuguese Throne. According to Dom Duarte: "Haffert was a great benefactor of Portugal, and I recall when in 1995, we honored the great Fado Singer Amalia Rodrigues, she said of John Haffert that, 'He was so generous to Our Lady of Portugal, that he ought to be called John Offered, instead of John Haffert.'"

John Haffert died on the vigil of the Feast of All Saints, the same day on which formerly was observed the *Feast of Blessed Nuno*. He died on the anniversary of the *Consecration of the World* made by Pope Pius XII.

He died in the presence of the Blue Army Executive, Father Cizik, who had just celebrated Holy Mass for him in his hospital room and given him Holy Communion. He died as the mystery of the Holy Assumption was being meditated on during the recitation of the Holy Rosary, and his funeral was held on the First Saturday...how fitting for this great advocate of the First Friday/Saturday vigils.

Guarda Seminary Theologian Father Messias Dias Coelho, presently the world's foremost expert of Fatima, Founder of the Message of Fatima Center and newspaper, close friend and collaborator of John's for over 50 years and former President of the Portuguese Blue Army in the 1950s, summed up our thought on John, when he stated that: "Portugal (and everyone) owes a great debt of gratitude to this man to whom the late Monsignor Harold Colgan personally claimed one day to be: '*The greatest man in the world!*'"

When we asked Sr. Lucia's convent to pray at the passing of John Haffert, we agreed that "a great light had gone out on earth, only to shine brighter upon earth from Heaven." John lived to see the long-awaited day of the revelation of the famous Third Secret of Fatima. He said, at the time: "I feel that God calls me, and that there is nothing more on earth for me to do. *I pass on the torch now to others to continue...*"

Written on the *Feast of All Saints*, 2001