



Groundbreaking for Thomas Berry Place

by Paula Katinas Diocesan News March 2, 2021



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JAMAICA — The Passionists’ religious order marked the beginning of a new chapter in its life of service in the Diocese of Brooklyn with a symbolic groundbreaking for a new environmentally-friendly building on Feb. 26.

Thomas Berry Place will be located at the former Bishop Molloy Retreat House site at 86-45 Edgerton Blvd. in Jamaica and will have solar panels, a working farm, and space for conferences and retreats. The new center will maintain space for ReConnect, a program founded in 2010 for disadvantaged young people interested in starting careers. Program participants are currently involved in a T-shirt-making business.

Thomas Berry Place is scheduled to open in 2022 and will primarily serve the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

The construction project, which is expected to cost approximately \$4 million, does not call for the Bishop Molloy Retreat House’s demolition. Still, it will entail a major renovation of the existing three-story building, along with the name change. The retreat house first opened in 1923.

Father Thomas Berry (1914-2009) was a Passionist scholar who lived in a local Passionist monastery in the 1960s and taught at Fordham University. Father Berry was also an environmentalist who believed in taking steps to preserve the planet.

The current Passionists have embraced that goal.

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“We are dedicated to serving those who are suffering. We also want to expand that to include helping a suffering planet,” said Father Jim O’Shea, C.P., the provincial for the Passionists for the Eastern U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, and parts of the Caribbean. “Thomas said we need a new story.”

The various ways the new center will be used — farming, prayer and contemplation, and conferences — “will be part of the new story of this house,” Father O’Shea added.

According to Father Bill Murphy, C.P, the Passionists have raised over \$800,000 for the project so far and are still accepting donations at www.thepassionists.org.

“Our major goal is to re-envision the retreat house and to serve the crucified of today,” Father Murphy said, referring to people who are suffering and in need of help.

The Passionists, officially known as the Congregation of the Passion of Christ, is a religious order of priests founded by St. Paul of the Cross in Italy in the 18th Century. They seek to connect to the suffering of Jesus Christ during the Passion and help others.

Joseph Geraci, director of development for the Passionists, quoted St. Paul of the Cross in describing the order’s mission.

“He that rises after his falls, with confidence in God and profound humility of heart, will become, in God’s hands, a proper instrument for the accomplishment of great things,” he said.

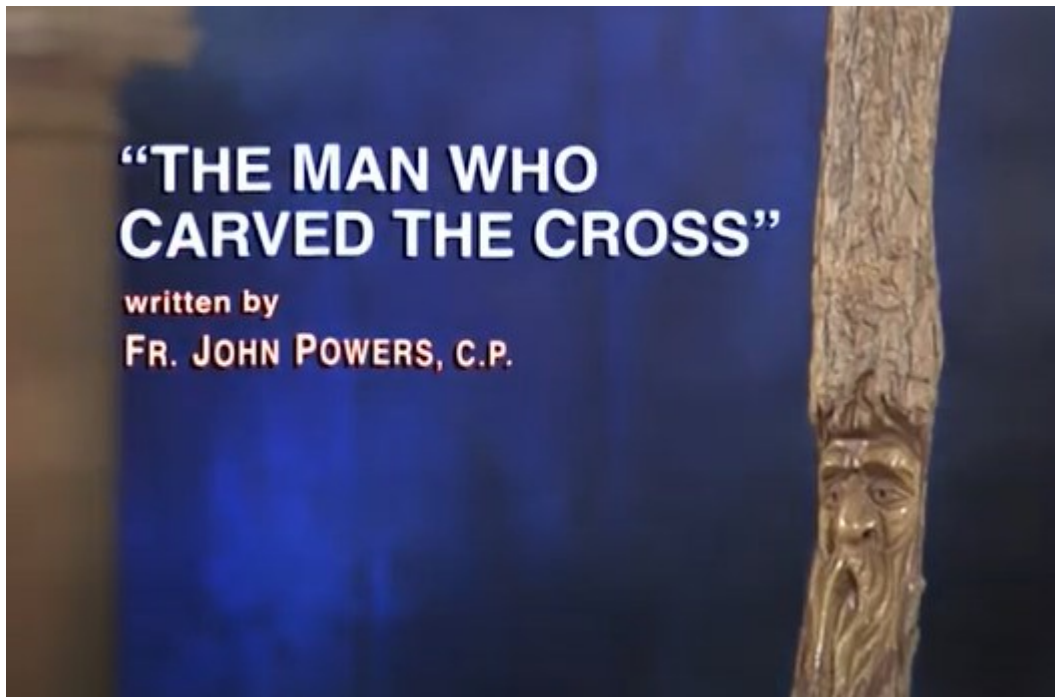
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by Father Victor Hoagland, CP

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