

**CHRIST THE KING PARISH; ACME, MI  
CHRISTMAS 2012**

Parishioners, family, and friends,

The town of Cotter, in northern Arkansas, has little reason to draw people. Dry county and all! But there was that general store! The proprietor combined southern hospitality and direct eye contact: “yes, we do have some items marked Cotter. This is the store of three **wonders**. I wonder if I have it, and then wonder where it is, and we **both wonder** whether we will find it.” My response: “Well, if it can fit on my motorcycle, let’s look!”

The remoteness of a gift shop or general store can begin building its character. A good thousand miles plus north of Arkansas, Combermere Ontario has likely just one gift shop, no bus stop. The enterprise dominates itself with religious goods, but silverware, jewelry and also odd items that never made it to a catalogue listing. The diversity stems from the diverse people, the stories, who pass along a treasure to extend its life span and as a contribution.. Monies go toward the prayer community of Madonna House.\*

As a long time member of the community, Mary traveled up towards Ottawa to be present for the funeral of her mother. She relished her community’s simplicity and was grateful to be present to family who had shaped that loving faith. Her own mother had likely pointed Mary to the Bethlehem star and another mother.

A community member was there at the bus station to welcome Mary home. Mary had an enthusiasm to show a family heirloom that was a companion on the return trip. A glass candy dish of her mother was unwrapped! Her driver proclaimed excitement for this special, singular, memento of her mother. “Mary, you will now have something you can always recall your mother with!” The pause may have paralleled that of an Old Testament prophet, moving toward something that should be written down. “Oh no”, Mary pointedly commented, “I won’t keep it. I might get attached to it”. A gift shop shelf felt another blessing.

Mary knew well what the Blessed Mother brought into this world. Where He came from and who He was, meant everything. A gift shop for the world had been opened and the most fortunate of us are realizing that the Christ gift cannot be improved on. Merry Christmas speaks to that ultimate attachment of ours.

My good fortune is that I have lost interest or memory of anything from the store of “three wonders”. It is a small start.

In a special Year of Faith,

Fr. Raymond Cotter / Pastor

\*[madonnahouse.org](http://madonnahouse.org) Lay community living by celibacy, obedience, and poverty. Field houses from the Yukon, Russia, England, Arizona, Washington, D.C. and more