

An Explanation
of
The

GROTTO

of the

REDEMPTION

WEST BEND
Palo Alto County
Iowa



Father Paul Dobberstein At Work

Spoken words are ephemeral; written words remain, but their durability depends upon the material upon which they are written; but if carved into bronze or sculptured into stone they are well nigh imperishable. This IMPERISHABLENESS is the outstanding feature of the Grotto."

Thus the story of the REDEMPTION will continue to tell its edifying story long after the builder has laid down his trowel, and will be a silent sermon expressing in permanently enduring precious stones, the fundamental truths of Christianity."

—P. M. Dobberstein

THE ARTIST FATHER DOBBERSTEIN

Rev. Father P. M. Dobberstein, the creator and builder of the Famous Grottos at West Bend, Iowa, laid down his trowel July 24, 1954, at 7:25 P.M. It was as if God had waited until the last ruddy rays of the setting sun had shed the last warm friendly rays over the twinkling towers of his grottos and then called the tired artist home from his life work.

Paul Matthias Dobberstein was born in Rosenfeld, Germany, on September 21, 1872. When Paul was 20 years old he emigrated to America. He received part of his early education at the University of Deutsche-Krone in Germany. On coming to America he entered the Seminary of St. Francis near Milwaukee, to prepare for the Priesthood. It was here that he began to show signs of the unusual artistic ability that was to characterize all the waking hours of his earthly existence.

He completed his studies for the Priesthood at St. Francis Seminary and was ordained there on June 30, 1897. He served for one year as the chaplain for the (hospital) Sisters of Mount Carmel in Dubuque. Then when the Archdiocese of Dubuque was divided and Sioux City jurisdiction was formed he was appointed the pastor of West Bend's Sts. Peter and Paul's Catholic Church and remained there in that capacity for the rest of his life. During fifty-seven years he was counsellor, instructor and leader to the parishioners of St. Peter and Paul's.

Besides the Grottos at West Bend, Father Dobberstein built grottos or memorials at the following places, none of which are as extensive as the achievement at West Bend:—

Riverside, Iowa—Sacred Heart Church—Lourdes Group.

Carroll, Iowa—Immaculate Conception Grotto—Began in 1923 and completed by Father Dobberstein in 1929.

Dubuque, Iowa—A grotto at the Franciscan Convent.

La Crosse, Wisconsin—Shrine in the St. Rose Convent of the Franciscan Sisters.

Wesley, Iowa—A crucifixion group in the Catholic Cemetery.

Parkston, South Dakota—A shrine in honor of Our Lady.

Humboldt, Iowa—A decorative grotto in the John Brown Park.

Pocahontas, Iowa—War Memorial, built on the site of the first county court house.

PASTORAL DUTIES

An idea of the steady growth of the parish at West Bend is evident from an inspection of the Baptismal records of the

GROTTO OF THE REDEMPTION

parish of Sts. Peter and Paul. Almost a thousand records of baptism appear there with the signature of Father Dobberstein at the bottom. The names of few other priests appear during the time that Father Dobberstein was pastor. For many years he went to the school regularly for the instruction of Christian Doctrine in the class rooms. In the afternoons he sometimes took time off from his masonry projects to lecture to the groups of visitors who flocked to the site of the Grottos. The older neighboring priests all have high praise for his genial and unselfish spirit of hospitality and the high standard of his scholastic ability. He was a deft man as a speaker and conversationalist as well as with the trowel.

Those who heard him instructing converts were amazed at his thoroughness as well as at his startling figures of speech.

Origin and Inspiration for the Great Work

The story of how the grotto came into being is as moving as are the scenes it portrays. It is generally told as a fact that as a young seminarian, Father Dobberstein became critically ill with pneumonia. As he fought for his life he prayed to the Blessed Virgin to intercede for him. He promised to build a shrine in her honor if he lived. The illness passed, the student completed his studies and after his ordination he came to West Bend as pastor in 1897. For over a decade he was stockpiling rocks and precious stones. The actual work of giving permanence to his promise began to take shape in 1912.

As time went on, the work of building the grottos progressed but there were many other projects sandwiched into his building schedule. The corner stone for the new grade school building was laid in 1899. The new parish Church was completed in 1922. The Casino-Restaurant was built in 1928.

Before 1947 all the work on the grottos was by hand labor, that is, the cement, mortar, rocks, steel and precious stones were moved to the building site and placed on the building platform or scaffolds by bucket or wheelbarrow. Only in 1947 when perhaps 80 percent of the gigantic project was completed was an electric hoist installed to make the work lighter for the ailing artist. This was done at the urgent suggestion of Father Louis Greving, who came to St. Peter and Paul's as permanent assistant June 21, 1946. After Father Dobberstein was physically unable to continue the work, his general plans were carried out in the minutest detail by Matthew Szerence. Father Dobberstein often referred to him as "his good right hand" and it was he who worked side by side with the good priest since the first stone was laid in 1912.

GROTTO OF THE REDEMPTION

Father Dobberstein was laid to rest in the parish cemetery.
May he rest in peace!

THE SETTING OF THE GROTTO

West Bend is located in the center of a vast, lush, level expanse of Iowa farm land. The surrounding area is populated by wise, industrious and fairly prosperous farmers. It is located northwest of Fort Dodge about midway between the busy state highways; number 18 to the north and number 20 to the south. On most road maps, West Bend is marked as the site of the Grotto of the Redemption.

It might seem odd that here where scarcely any type of rock is known, not to mention any deposits of precious, geological specimens that this great collection of unique stones should be found. However, it is merely the play of Divine Providence that determined the setting in this particular place. The site was chosen because the Bishop decided to send Father Dobberstein to that particular parish, located at West Bend.

As early as 1901 it is known that Father Dobberstein had begun to prepare the setting for the Grotto. First it was necessary to purchase a satisfactory parcel of land. After it was secured he began excavating for the lake. The birch trees with which he first surrounded it have long since lived their lives. As the years went by other trees took their places and the lake front was covered with verdant grass, and became a restful picnic area. When the summer crowds of visitors had grown quite numerous he constructed a substantial restaurant near the lake. Here, the ladies of the parish undertook the task of providing food for the convenience of the pilgrims to West Bend. Besides the restaurant there is a little souvenir stand. There, mementos, a small history of the grottos and colored picture cards can be purchased. This however, never became a commercial venture of any ambitious magnitude. It was through these ventures that much of the untold expense of building the grottos was liquidated.

MATERIALS FOR THE GROTTO

"Thou, the friendless, the storm-beaten, the inconsolable, shalt have a PAVEMENT of patterned STONES, and thy FOUNDATIONS shall be of SAPPHIRE; thou shalt have turrets of JASPER, and gates of carved GEMS, and all thy BOUNDARY STONES, shall be JEWELS". Isaias, 54-11-12—Knox.

The love of precious stones is deeply implanted in the human heart, and the cause of this must be sought not only in their coloring and brilliancy but also in their durability. All the

GROTTO OF THE REDEMPTION

fair colors of flowers and foliage, even the blue of the sky and the glory of sunset clouds, only last for a short time, and are subject to continual change, but the sheen and color of precious stones are the same today as they were thousands of years ago and will be for countless thousands of years to come. In a world of change, this permanence has a charm of its own that was appreciated early in the history of mankind and remains to this day.

It is evident from his work that Father Dobberstein was a great lover of beauty. In fulfilling his vow to erect a shrine to the Mother of Christ he was determined to make the most of material beauty and to emphasize the spiritual beauty of the Woman he had in mind. We can imagine with what love his heart beat when he found pearls, warm glowing rubies and celestial hued sapphires to incorporate into the shrine. It was a source of great pleasure to him to gather them here that all might see and admire what he had done. It was his purpose that others might see in the Beauty of stones the Beauty of the Creator and by being charmed and attracted by his work learn to imitate the virtues of the Mother of our Savior.

Below is a partial list of precious and semi-precious stones many of which can be found somewhere in the West Bend grottos. A short description is added to enable those interested to identify them.

Agate:—A variegated, waxy quartz in which the colors are in bands. Many excellent specimens of agate are to be found in the Christmas Chapel and incorporated in the Stations of the Cross.

Alexandrite:—A variety of chrysoberl from the emerald mines on the Takowaya River, Ural Mountains, Russia. Predominant colors are green and columbine red.

Amber:—A yellowish, fossilized vegetable resin. Very little will be found in the exposed parts of the grotto because amber is soft and likely to be affected by weathering.

Amethyst:—Quartz with clear purple or violet color. Specimens found here are from Brazil and from the Andes mountains in South America.

Barite:—Barium sulphate, brownish tan, abundant in Grotto.

Beryl:—A vitreous green hexagonal shaped aluminum silicate.

Bloodstone:—Green jasper containing deep red spots.

Carbuncle:—A red garnet cut without facets—this gem is often used as a symbol of the divine Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

Carnelian:—A clear, red chalcedony.

Chalcedony:—A waxy, translucent crypto-crystalline variety of quartz.

Chrysoberyl:—A vitreous yellow-brown and green glucinum aluminate. The best specimens of this semi-precious stone come from Ceylon.

Chrysolite:—A vitreous, olive-green, transparent or translucent magnesium silicate. (Topaz.)

Chrysoprase:—Apple-green variety of chalcedony, colored by nickel-oxide.

Coral:—The skeleton or hard structures secreted in or by the tissues of certain marine animals. There are as many varieties of color as there are hues in the rainbow.

Emerald:—The rich green variety of beryl. Often mentioned in the Bible but never definitely identified.

Fossils:—When fossilization takes place a substance or the image of a substance is preserved for us by being buried for a long time in solid rock or in some other hard earthy substance.

Gypsum:—When hydrous sulfate of lime occurs in crystalline and transparent form it is sometimes called selenite. When it is finely grained and of variegated color it is called alabaster. Satin spar comes almost exclusively from Russia. There is an abundance of gypsum found in the grotto.

Hematite:—This is an unusually good specimen of iron ore which contains mica. Various colored kinds are found in the Grotto.

Jacinth:—Same as zircon.

Jade:—A hard, tough, greenish silicate. Nephrite is a silicate of magnesia and very tough. Jadeite is a variety of the same composition but softer than nephrite. The most abundant sources are China and New Zealand.

Jasper:—An impure, opaque, usually red, brown or yellow variety of quartz.

Jet:—A rich, black variety of mineral coal—very often used as an ornament. Source, Pueblo, Colorado.

Lapis Lazuli:—A rich blue mixture of minerals known even to the ancient Babylonians.

Lodestone:—A variety of magnetite that shows polarity. It was known to and fascinated the Romans, Greeks and ancient Chinese.

Malachite:—This is one of the variations of copper ore that can be found in abundance in the grotto.

Moonstone:—Whitish feldspar with changeful lustre.

Onyx:—A variety of quartz consisting of layers of different colors usually in even planes.

Petrifications:—A petrification is the natural substance of, for example, a tree or plant which has been replaced by minerals.

Pyrite:—A metallic, pale brass-yellow iron ore. Fool's Gold.

Quartz:—Many colors.

Rock Crystal:—Colorless transparent quartz. One specimen in the grotto weighs over two thousand pounds.

Ruby:—A deep, red stone commonly of corundum or spindel.

Sapphire:—Any one of the hard transparent, colored varieties of corundum, usually the blue variety—blue quartz.

Sard:—A deep, brownish-red variety of carnelian, translucently blood-red.

Scoria:—Fragmentary lava or slag. Much of the scoria found at the grotto was found in the Bad Lands of North Dakota.

Serpentine:—A massive or fibrous, often mottled green or yellowish magnesium silicate.

Shells:—The coverings of a variety of marine animals. Many of these varicolored curiosities are incorporated in the foundations for the various Stations of the Cross.

Smaragdite:—A thin, foliated, light grass-green variety of amphibole.

Stalactites:—An elongated, pendulous, icicle-like form in which certain minerals, especially calcium carbonate are sometimes deposited, mostly in underground caves.

Stalagmite:—An incrustation, usually cylindrical or conical in shape on the floor of a cavern; a counterpart of the stalactite, often fusing with it into a stalactite column. The stalactites and stalagmites in the grotto come mostly from the Crystal Jewel caves of the Black Hills, South Dakota, the Ozarks and the Carlsbad.

Topaz:—Chrysolite (Colorado).

Turquoise:—A waxy, blue or green, subtranslucent to opaque hydrous aluminum phosphate, found massive and used as a gem.

Venetian Mosaics:—The abundance of this material, which is a special kind of glass covered with gold leaf was imported from Italy at great expense.

Zircon:—Adamantine (hard) variety of variously colored mineral, zirconium silicate.

The carved white marble of the statuary groups is mined in the Appenines in Italy. The probable outlay for statuary will top \$100,000. It is interesting that the Rev. William Menster, the Chaplain with the Byrd expedition to the Antarctica brought back a specimen of rock from the South Pole regions.

Under the chapter "Materials for the Grotto" it ought not to be out of place to mention that the many offerings of the visitors have aided substantially to create this artistic wonder.

And what of the Faith, Hope and Charity that glowed in the heart of Father Dobberstein—the ultimate source of these is the omnipotent and ever loving heart of the Creator of the Universe.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GROTTO

In outlining the PURPOSE of the GROTTO the intention has been deliberate to preserve as far as possible the thought and expression of Father Dobberstein. His first and only account of the grotto is undated but it is thought to have appeared around the year 1936. The booklet was prepared and printed because of the ever-increasing inquiries of the visiting public. The builder thought, and we can easily understand and sympathize with his attitude, that he was often times too occupied with his work to answer in detail their many questions.

From the time that the structure began to attract attention it was always called "The Grotto of the Redemption."

Those who have traveled in parts of Europe are familiar with the religious atmosphere of grottos. The traveler who wends his way through the Pyrenees and the Apennines finds many caves and caverns in the steep mountain sides. Various inevitable forces of natural erosion and drainage have contributed to the formation of these cave-like openings. Because some of these openings in solid rock were large enough to enter they provided interest for the cold, the courageous and the curious.

Many of the natural caves contain colorful crystal formations. Water trickling through the overhead strata form, usually a calcium deposit in the shape of an icicle. These overhead deposits are technically known as Stalactites. Where the drops of water fall on the surface below they build up a similar but inverted deposit called a Stalagmite. The fanciful coloring and the fantastic shapes that these Stalagmites and Stalactites assume depends on the variation of temperature, frequency of water trickle and many other natural factors.

Grottos differ from caves only in this, that the openings near the surface of a vertical rock barrier are referred to as grottos. Caves or caverns may extend for miles under the surface and may or may not be high enough for a person to walk into comfortably.

The early use that was made of them by pious people gave the grottos their religious scope. In mountainous regions it is the custom of men and women to attend their flocks on the most rugged terrain and to remain there with them day and night for months at a time during the summer season. In them they lodged, ate their meals and satisfied their religious needs. When Sunday came they could hear the distant church bells calling for divine service. Because of the great distance the shepherds could not go. They would however, hasten to their Grottos. These they had decorated with religious em-

THE LABOR OF BUILDING

Most architects and contractors would hesitate a long time before undertaking a project such as the Grotto of the Redemption at West Bend. It is doubtful whether it can or ever will be duplicated. The sheer bulk of the achievement is startling when we consider that most of the manual labor was done by two men and practically all of the artistic endeavor was done by Father Dobberstein singlehanded.

It must be remembered that Father Dobberstein was the pastor of a parish, the size of which alone constituted a full time job. Father Dobberstein did not have an assistant until Father Greving came as his full time assistant on June 21, 1946. It is amazing what can be accomplished by one man possessed of patience and ability. There is almost a hundred carloads of rocks and stones, the vast bulk of which had to be minutely processed, stored, classified and handled many times before it found its final and proper place in the harmonious structure.

No accounting was made either of the many man hours of labor involved in building the Grotto or the money expended in gathering stones and shaping them into a harmonious unit. This is perhaps because Father Dobberstein wanted the cost to be known but to God alone.

On not a few occasions the artist took time out from his labor of building, to lecture extemporaneously and eloquently about his handicraft and his future plans.

On many of his travels in search of stones and rocks he was hampered by almost impossible roads, bad weather and poor transportation. Once he was lost for several hours in a dark cave in South Dakota. He saved his life on that occasion by sheer, good common sense. He remained quietly where he was until his associates came searching for him. In an auto accident near Dubuque while on a search for stones in 1928 he suffered multiple bone fractures which kept him away from his work for over six months. Another time a scaffolding collapsed which had been overloaded with rocks and mortar, Father escaped with a sprained ankle. Another time while driving along a road in the Black Hills a dynamite explosion set off prematurely or carelessly by a road building crew occurred minutes before his arrival.

One of the most amazing things about the Grotto at West Bend is the great tenacity of purpose the builder displayed in carrying out his plans. Indeed, it is the largest known accomplishment of its kind anywhere in the world!

blems. They used candles for lighting them. They erected altars and in them could be found crucifixes and sacred pictures. There they knelt to render homage to God and keep holy the Lord's day.

Often they recited their prayers aloud, thus placing themselves spiritually in touch with the faithful assembled for service in the churches below. Being away from life bustling with its temptations and distractions, they became known to the villagers as the most religious people in the world, giving much of their time, whilst watching their flocks, to pious meditation. Most fruitfully they meditated on the life of our Lord. Often they were envied by the busy villagers for the time they had to give, and really did give, to the care of their immortal souls.

Thus came into vogue the practice of erecting artificial grottos in the villages where people could go to rest their souls occasionally, viewing in a practical way the beautiful scenes presented there of the outstanding events of our Lord's life, as He traveled through Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, walking over the hillsides and mountain sides preaching the great doctrines of eternal salvation. To bring people of today, who live centuries removed from those blessed days into closer touch with the things of God, is the aim and effort of the builder of the Grotto of the Redemption at West Bend, Iowa.

In this connection the Blessed Mother of Christ is shown in her place as the indispensable agent in giving to the world our Blessed Redeemer. Because of the role she thus played, sacred writers of all times have used expressions like these: "per matrem ad Filium" which means, "through the mother to the Son"; and again, "per Filium ad Patrem," which means, "through the Son to the Father."

It is the aim of the Grotto to present, in palpable form, this reunion of man and God, the reconciliation between fallen human nature and offended Divine Justice; because truth reaches the mind most easily by way of the senses.

In the days of the shepherds of the Middle Ages, watching their flocks both day and night, ministers of the word of God were often sent on Sundays to these mountain retreats to preach in these natural Grottos, to make up for the shepherds' inability to attend church services in the villages below.

May this not be the reason why our vacationers of today sometimes seek the quiet of the mountains, there to rest and recreate their souls? The Lord himself sought the mountains as the most fitting retreat in which to pray. It would seem that, because of the shepherd's effort to be in a more close communion with God in prayer and thought, He offered to them a more vivid and direct communication than He did to

those living out among all the cares and distractions of the noisy world.

Again, the reverence of the shepherds for the Immaculate Mother of our Savior assumed a well defined devotion, so much so, that history has credited her with actual appearances to the saintly shepherds when at prayer. These actual appearances or apparitions, have been investigated and their actuality established beyond a doubt. A well known instance is that of Lourdes, at the foot of the Pyrenees, in southern France, where, in a grotto, an apparition of the Mother of Christ to a saintly shepherd girl, Bernadette Soubirous, took place. To this day pilgrimages from all over the world are made to Lourdes. Cripples and hopelessly diseased persons are brought there. In many instances sudden and permanent cures are witnessed. They are attested to not only by sightseers, but by large panels of the most competent physicians. Many of those qualified physicians are non-Catholic, some even did not believe in a personal God.

Of the many questions asked by the visitors at the grotto of the Redemption at West Bend, none is as unerring as the following: "What purpose is the Grotto to serve?" This inquiry may be answered by saying: The designed purpose of the Grotto is to tell, in silent stone made spiritually eloquent, the story of man's fall and his redemption by Christ, the Savior of the world. All ages and centuries of the Christian era have produced their beautiful edifices, pointing with their mighty spires upward to God. Worthy houses of divine worship, wrought in the finest materials, are being erected everywhere today. It may be well remembered, however, that Christ, when on earth, very seldom availed Himself of the temple of Jerusalem which, after all, would have proven altogether too small to contain the vast multitudes assembled to hear Him. He chose rather the quiet hillsides or mountainsides, the desert, the shores of Lake Genesareth, or some other segregated place, from which to pour forth His heavenly messages. He cried out, "He that hath ears, let him hear." Outstanding among those occasions is our Savior's celebrated Sermon on the Mount.

The builder of the Grotto hopes, by visualizing, in stone, the fundamentals of the Christian religion, to induce the visitors here, to be not only idle hearers, but also contemplative thinkers and courageous doers, of the word of Christ. The heart of man is usually more quickly reached through the eye than through the ear. The builder was confident that the finished product would speak for itself. Thus he was animated by the spirit of the psalm, "I shall be satisfied when Thy Glory cometh."

So far the annual count of visitors to the Grotto has averaged near the one hundred thousand mark. They come from all parts of the country. There have never been miraculous apparitions of any kind connected with the Grotto. No claim for cures or miracles have been made. It is intended solely to help us to a deeper love and a better service of God.

Besides the religious objective, Father Dobberstein had still another object in mind. He adorned his shrine with precious and valuable stones, ores, minerals, fossils, petrifications, corals and shells. These have been gathered not only from the many states of the American continent, but literally from all the waters and all the lands of the whole world. Father Dobberstein endured hunger, cold, and long hours and weary miles of travel to search out, collect, identify and place them in their proper setting in the panoramic layout of the huge project. Here at the Grotto then is an exhibit of geological specimens which is unique and undoubtedly unmatched anywhere in the world. Who can properly estimate what tremendous educational value it will be to students of geology and lapidary in succeeding generations as decade after decade rolls by?

THE ARTIST'S PLAN

Although there were never any blueprints of the Grotto, it might be said that all that the artist decided to do in a creative way was crystallized when he finished his course of Sacred Theology. His only plan was to tell the story of the Redemption. That story is the backbone of Theology. Man lost the friendship of God and regained it through the Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God.

Actually the whole panoramic outlay of artistry is made up of nine grottos or scenes, from the Life of Christ, each of them portraying a portion of the complete story of the Redemption.

1. GARDEN OF EDEN

This scene might be subtitled, "Paradise Lost." After the creation the most important event in the history of the human race is the story of Man's fall from sanctifying grace. Here we see the Tree of Life which is mentioned in Genesis II, 9. It is constructed of stone and occupies a prominent place in the Garden. The cunning tempter, disguised in the form of a serpent is creeping along the wall. Slowly, stealthily and quietly he ascends the Tree of Life. Eve made it possible for the drama to reach its inevitable climax. She listened to the words of the deceiver—ate the forbidden fruit. And so with Eve, Adam and the whole human race lost the friendship of God.

The gate of Paradise is shown at the top of the wall to the left. Near by in marble are placed the images of Adam and Eve and the Angel of Paradise. The latter has a flaming sword in his hand, with which he touches the arch of the gate. A reminder to us that earth is no longer a paradise, but a place of probation. At the outside of the gate is Eve, head bowed and eyes fixed on the tree below in an attitude of cold indifference. She seems not to realize the seriousness of her transgression. Adam is seen shielding his eyes with his hand, casting an anxious look at the hill of Calvary. It seems that with his prophetic insight he can see another tree, the Tree of the Cross which bore the Savior on Calvary.

The promise of the Redeemer was to be kept alive by Adam's descendants for many weary centuries of waiting. The drab colored flint used in the construction of this Grotto represents our tendency to evil. But the glorious colored quartz and white crystals inspire us to hope. They represent the goodness of God that is in us in spite of our contrary indifference to Good.

2. THE GROTTO OF THE STABLE OF BETHLEHEM

A strong note of gladness is now introduced into the story of the Redemption. This grotto differs from the others by the simplicity of its structure. The crude and humble materials of which it is composed remind us of the poverty of Christ. There is seen the Divine Child, a marble figure, in a plain crib resting on a bundle of straw.

3. THE HOME OF NAZARETH

This scene portrays the humble domicile of the carpenter, St. Joseph, the foster Father of Jesus. It is a glimpse of a phase of Our Lord's early life about which we know least. The materials of this grotto are also of a kind to suggest the poverty and humility of the Boyhood of Jesus. It is a humble dwelling set in a garden plot and fenced in by a stone wall. Over the wall we read the inscription: "Nazareth". The marble statute here portrays Joseph busy about his tasks as a tradesman. Mary, the tidy housewife, the Mother of Jesus is shown preparing the simple foods that she shared with her spouse and her Creator. The marble statute of Jesus portrays Him at about the age of twelve. He is holding a book. On the open pages of it you can read the inscription: "Follow Me!"

4. THE GROTTO OF THE TRINITY

When Christ commissioned the Apostles He said: "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth; as the Father hath sent Me, so I send you. Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28. 18-19.

This Grotto of the Trinity is built in three half circles in honor of the Three Divine Persons. The ceiling of it is open but topped off with a little dome. It symbolizes the unity of One God in three Divine Persons. This is the first Grotto that Father Dobberstein built. He started it in 1912. Most of the rocks are calcite, which came from a cave in South Dakota, near the Black Hills.

In the first half circle there is a window of art glass, showing the archangel Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary that she has been chosen to be the Mother of God. The Virgin objected that she did not know man. The answer of the divine messenger was couched in these words: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and, therefore, also the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1, 35. Over the window arch is seen a quarter moon design, the symbol of the Immaculate Mary.

In the second half circle is shown in marble, the Virgin Mother with the Christ child in her arms, presenting Him as Savior of the world. In the ceiling, above the arch of this statue, is seen the star of Bethlehem with its comet's tail.

Above this star, placed upside down, is the archangel's greeting: "AVE," meaning, "Hail!" "Blessed!" It is placed upside down to remind us that it is not from earth, but from heaven above that all our blessings come. It is addressed to Mary, the second Eve, who has none of the languid earthly indifference of the first. It is she who was immaculately conceived that she might worthily bring forth the Redeemer. This work of the Redeemer Mary understands completely knowing full well that through Him Man will be restored to the original righteousness in which he was created. Underfoot is the serpent showing that Mary's victory over temptation is complete. The two streamlets which flow at either side into the basin below represent the two natures of Christ, the human and the divine. They remind us that all grace comes from God through the mediation of the God-Man.

In the third half circle is shown the cross of Christ, the eternal symbol of the Redemption. There also are the instruments of the passion, the hammer and the nails. The sponge is there too, reminding us that when Jesus, worn out with agony cried out on the Cross, "I thirst," they gave Him vinegar and gall. There too is the lance with which the Roman soldier pierced the Sacred Heart of Christ to make certain that Christ was dead. We are told that when the water and blood flowed out of that wound it should remind us that the omnipotent God had given His all. Over the cross is shown

the crown of thorns which was pressed upon the head of Christ in the courtyard of Pilate. He asserted that He was a King, though not of this world. The figure of a sun over the arch of the cross section is a reminder to us that the Savior is the Sun of Justice.

5. THE GROTTO OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The fifth of this complex of Grottos is called the Grotto of the Ten Commandments. The Pharisees, an influential Jewish sect, asked the Savior sarcastically if He had come to do away with the "Law of Moses." Jesus answered that He had come, not to abrogate the law, but to fulfill it. Moses was the great law-giver of the Old Testament. The magnificent figure of Moses is portrayed in shining white marble. He is holding in his hands the tables of the Ten Commandments, to remind us that God gave them to us through Moses on Mount Sinai. These Commandments are the backbone of man's moral conduct. The first three are intended to keep us right with God. The other seven are to keep man right with himself and his fellows.

To the right of the entrance of this Grotto is seen the figure of our Blessed Lord. His right elbow is supported in His left hand and He is pointing His finger to the slab of the Ten Commandments, held by Moses, the Law Giver. Christ is looking into the fair face of the rich young man mentioned in the Gospel, who stands at the left side of the entrance, asking Our Lord a very good question: "Good Master, what must I do to gain eternal life?" It is a question he asks not only for himself but for everyone who has the courage to look beyond the grave and has seriously considered the possibility of life eternal! The answer Our Lord made to this question was, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments!" Matthew 22-36. The question is written, in letters of Venetian gold mosaic, into a large question mark on the floor. It extends ten feet from the niche of Moses towards the entrance. It is of solid stone of fine quality and color. Inlaid with it, is a scroll of beautiful green copper ore. It is the question of all time and of all men. "What must I do to gain eternal life?" The answer is God's own answer, binding Jews, Gentiles and Christians alike: "Keep the Commandments!"

The next stone representations of the Grotto are the last scenes in the Life of Jesus—His sufferings and His death. Even Shakespeare, the greatest name in English literature, nay, in any literature, was not ashamed, in one of his dramas, to refer to these sad scenes in language that is truly beautiful, tender and touching. He speaks of the places where these events were enacted as a soil made sacred by the footsteps of

our Savior, as "The land where walked those blessed feet which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nailed for our advantage, to the bitter Cross."

SIXTH GROTTO — GETHSEMANE

Introducing these pathetically memorable events is the sixth Grotto, that of Gethsemane. Here the Savior is shown in an attitude of fervent prayer, sweating blood at the sight of the sins for which he is to suffer. St. Luke in the Gospel (XXII) gives us the picture of the half-prostrate Christ, but with upturned face: "And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." He told Peter and James and John, who were sleeping at a little distance from Him, that His soul was sorrowful unto death. His prayer was that the Father might take away from Him the chalice of His clearly foreseen suffering. Each time He humbly and resignedly added, "Yet not my will but thine be done." This prayer, twice interrupted by short visits to the sleeping disciples, was repeated three times, when an angel came down from heaven to console Him.

A more touching picture could hardly be imagined. It is not strange that scenes like these should have appealed to the heart of mankind. This is evident from the fact that paintings, sculpture, poetry and drama have so much of these stirring episodes as the background of their art. It is no wonder then that so many pilgrims from every age have gone to the Holy Lands to see those sacred places. They go to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth and to Calvary to meditate on the sufferings of our Savior.

That is the reason that the whole sad story of Christ's suffering is told in the Grottos of the Redemption. The figures that portray the Passion of Our Lord are partly in Venetian mosaic and partly in Carrara marble. Fourteen of these interesting places where the pilgrims came to meditate and pray, came to be called the FOURTEEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

SEVENTH GROTTO — TWELVE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The FIRST STATION shows Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. He has already been accused, tried and condemned. Pilate, who had many of the qualities of a great, good and just judge, vainly attempted to free Him. The bloodthirsty, disappointed rabble, so loudly shouted and clamored for His death that the intimidated judge had not the heart to reject their demands. In a mock ceremony he washed his hands, vainly protesting that he was innocent of the blood of

Him whom he weakly gave up to their demands. It was a useless mockery of justice; for an ocean of water could not have washed away his guilt.

The SECOND STATION shows Jesus accepting the Cross. The hands of Jesus had to be unbound, then they shot out with eagerness, strong with love to embrace this ugliness and hug it to a Heart that had been pounding with impatience for years. The heavy cross soon wore his already bleeding shoulder into terrible soreness. He panted beneath His cross as He dragged it. He had begun the journey of "His last half-mile."

The THIRD STATION of the Cross shows Jesus crushed to the earth like a worm beneath the weight of the cross. He was suffering from exhaustion, loss of blood, hunger and thirst. But no mercy is shown unto Him. He is driven to His feet with pitiless kicks and blows of the scourge. He is forced to continue His weary way; made to bear the crushing burden as best He can.

In the next, the FOURTH STATION, we see Jesus meeting His sorrow-afflicted Mother. The white tender hands of a woman stretch out toward the blood encrusted ones that hug the Cross. With those hands she had held Him as a Babe. Hand in hand with hers He made His first steps. Now she is powerless to give any physical aid. She went out on the road not to pity him but to spur Him on to His Sacrifice. But cursing, impatient hangmen do not long allow this pause to last.

The FIFTH STATION shows Simon of Cyrene, helping Jesus to carry the Cross. He is the Father of Rufus and Alexander, and met the mob with Jesus as he was returning home for dinner from his little farm, where he had been working. This was a fortunate break both for the soldiers and for Simon. The soldiers thought their victim would die prematurely, so Simon the farmer was pressed into service as a substitute cross-bearer. Simon was at first unwilling to undergo this disgrace, but before long Simon was carrying it with joy. Grace of the Redeemer had touched his soul.

The SIXTH STATION portrays the scene of Veronica offering her veil that Jesus might wipe His sweaty face. Lo and behold, on returning it to her with thanks, she sees that He has returned it with the image of His divine countenance imprinted upon it. Blind to all human respect Veronica never dreamed that the reward for such a small favor would be so timeless and so magnificent. This teaches us the generosity of God towards those who serve Him.

The SEVENTH STATION portrays another pitiful accident on the journey to Calvary. The Body's strength is still ebbing. Despite the encouraging meeting with his Mother and

the help of Simon, the weight is overwhelming. After stumbling, Jesus lies face down in the dust! This symbolizes man's relapse into sin. The readiness of Divine Forgiveness to the repentant is represented by Christ rising and steadily progressing towards the Hill of Shame. Calvary's height must be gained—God's glory and men's souls are at stake.

The EIGHTH STATION represents to us the memorable meeting of Jesus with the weeping women of Jerusalem. When everyone else had turned faithless, when even His apostles had shrunk from His side, these courageous women, loyal in their love to the last, and in the face of ridicule and abuse, came bravely forward with their pity, their compassion, their sympathy and their tears. Everlasting glory and honor to these women. Jesus accepts their sympathy in His sufferings but significantly reminds them of the cause of it. "You weep for me," He seems to say, "and you are right; but really there are those more deserving of tears than I am. For them the time will come." This is a powerful exhortation for all to do penance for their personal sins.

The next, the NINTH STATION of the Cross, once more shows us Jesus falling again under the weight of the Cross. Here again the terrible relapse into sin is imagined, and it's still more terrible atonement portrayed. Brought to the very verge of martyrdom, the mangled and exhausted Savior is seen lying prostrate on the ground, with His tormentors malignantly and triumphantly exulting over Him in His misery. A deeper degradation and a worse humiliation can hardly be imagined. O how the conceit of the proud must here feel rebuked! How it must tremble at the thought of having one day to appear at the bar of divine justice!

A screaming sacrilege is portrayed before our eyes in the TENTH STATION of the Cross, as we see Jesus being stripped of His garments. It is the last hideous preliminary to his crucifixion. It is another deep and painful humiliation for Him to go through. I am crimson with shame, O my Savior as I remember that at the beginning of your Passion you said, "The flesh is weak." The paradox is almost too much for the human mind to understand! Here, almost at the end, You see how strong it is! Strong enough to strip innocence and leave unsullied Purity naked before the gaze of a filthy-minded multitude. O God of limitless mercies, forgive me. Forgive all of us. Forgive us our immodesty, our impurity, our incontinence. Forgive us our effeminacy, our luxury, our lust. It is our indulgence in the flesh and of the flesh that became this clawing hand tearing your robe from its beautiful Body. Forgive me for my part in this shameful deed.

In the ELEVENTH STATION we behold the awful crucifixion. This dreadful deed holds the eyes of all men everywhere. It embodies the fulfillment of the words of Scripture: "He was made obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross." Arriving at Calvary the Savior was told to lie down upon the Cross by His executioners. He obeyed, obeyed without a murmur, obeyed in atonement for our disobedience. Then His holy hands and feet were fastened to it. If you are not moved by the sight, you are little to be envied and much to be pitied. As the hammer strokes echo across Calvary's bare hill, from the bloodied, broken lips of the God-Man come the unbelievable words: "Father forgive them; they know not what they do." Luke 23-24.

The TWELFTH STATION is the culmination of this awful tragedy. The Cross with its bleeding victim, is lifted up, and with shocking suddenness, set in the socket prepared for it. There in motionless agony hangs the Savior of the world. Bossuet has well said: "There is nothing in the universe greater than Jesus Christ; and nothing in Jesus Christ greater than His Sacrifice; and nothing in His Sacrifice greater than that last sigh and precious moment which separated His all-adorable soul from His all-adorable Body. And that moment has been made unending when Christ said, "Do this in commemoration of me." Luke 22-19. This Station is done in white, whereas the preceding ones are done in dark. That is to symbolize that at this stage of Christ's suffering the redemption is fully accomplished. The shadow of sin has now vanished and the light of grace has taken its place. The curse which for thousands of years had rested on the world is now lifted, and in its place divine blessings are descending. A rainbow in the sky speaks of peace in the universe.

The THIRTEENTH STATION is on top of the mountain called Calvary. There is shown the Cross on which Christ was crucified. Now it is relieved of its burden, and a ladder is resting against it. Virgin Mother is seen with the limp lifeless body of her divine Son on her lap. The profound sorrow depicted on her countenance must needs awaken the most indifferent spectator's sympathy. God became a corpse for me! This is a Mystery that stuns my imagination. The crosses of the other two thieves are forgotten, forgotten is everything as I gaze upon the Symbol of my salvation as it lies in tender arms of Mary.

THE EIGHTH GROTTO

The FOURTEENTH STATION of the Cross and the EIGHTH Grotto is placed on a lower level in a beautiful setting. The coffin-like receptacle for the Body of the Redeemer.

with its cover open and consisting of shaded inset stone will long arrest the visitor's attention. In it is laid the Savior's sleeping figure, in costly white Carrara marble. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are seen carefully, respectfully reverently and sadly placing the body. The three figures have been sculpted out of a single block of white Italian marble.

THE NINTH GROTTO

The next grotto is that of the Resurrection. It contains the Savior's empty tomb, with the angel sitting upon it to tell the early morning callers that Jesus is no longer there. "He is not here; He is Risen. Behold the place where they laid Him." These words of the angel appear in gold mosaic in front of the empty tomb. The words vividly remind us of our own future resurrection. Of the buried and dead Lazarus, Jesus said, "He sleepeth." Then he called him back to life! He said the same of the daughter of Jairus, and awakened her from death. "I am the way, the resurrection and the life," and He proved it in his own case and also in the case of those He resuscitated. Just outside this Grotto are seen the figures of the risen Jesus and Mary Magdalen, representing the touching scene of their meeting on Easter Morning, as described in the Gospel.

The artistic painting over the sanctuary of Sts. Peter's and Paul's Church might serve as a substitute for the Tenth Grotto. Father Dobberstein dreamed of a magnificent Ascension scene surpassing all the other grottos. However, old age and death cut short that dream. The painting in the Church represents the Savior on the occasion of His last scene on earth. He is standing on the Mount of Olives, the very place where His bitter Passion began. Gradually He appears to move away from the earth before a large number of witnesses. They gaze at Him in wonder and astonishment, till finally a cloud encloses Him and takes Him away from the sight of their sorrowing, tear-filled eyes. "And behold, while they were gazing upon Him going up into heaven, two men stood by them in white garments, who said, You men of Galilee, why stand you looking up into Heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall come, as you have seen Him going into Heaven" (Acts I).

* * * * *

7. THE FUTURE OF THE GROTTO

Any one who has approached the Grotto, must have been impressed by the spirit of prayer that pervades the whole atmosphere here, giving it the air of a sanctuary. It is for this reason that no rules are laid down for the behavior of the visitor. This is a religious shrine. It is understood that the

visitors avoid boisterousness and shouting so that others may reap the full spiritual benefit of their visit.

The many petty acts of vandalism in the past have done untold damage. If everyone of the thousands who come here were to chip away only a tiny piece of stone to take for a souvenir, it would not be many years before there would be NOTHING worthwhile for anyone to see. It would, indeed be a sad day when those responsible for the preservation of the Shrine would find it necessary to surround this Beauty with a fence and keep it under lock and key.

The many hours that Father Dobberstein labored here remind us not only of his own unselfishness but that every one has a purpose in life—first and most important to save his own individual soul. Here is an example of a man of talent who used his gifts to the full. His vocation was that of a humble parish priest. Above and beyond the demands of his vocation he used his artistic talents to inspire countless thousands, first to be aware of and then to seek after the Everlasting Beauty. His shrine is not only a silent sermon, eloquently preaching the truths of our Faith, it will utterly confound the superstitions of those pitifully narrow-minded persons who believe in the mystic powers of precious stones.

What of the future of the Grotto. The Grotto of the Redemption deserves no future if it is merely to serve as a curious pause in the journey of the casual visitor. The superabundance of inspired work, the unexcelled beauty of workmanship and the years of patient planning, all would have no purpose if it only provided a passing interlude for the curiosity seeker. If those whose eyes rest upon the symmetry of design can be spiritually refreshed, their faith strengthened, hope bolstered and their love for the Infinite God broadened, then only will the Grotto serve a useful purpose.

THE CHRISTMAS CHAPEL

Father Dobberstein considered some of the fine mineral specimens which he found on his trips too delicate to be used in the out-of-doors grottos. The elements, the weather and the changing seasons all would conspire to spoil their beauty. He decided, therefore, to incorporate them into an in-door piece of art, which he placed for shelter in St. Peter's and Paul's Church. They represent the birthplace and the Nativity of Our Divine Savior. In other words this particular piece of art portrays the "Incarnation".

"Incarnation" means being made into flesh. Christ assumed human nature by taking His flesh from Mary, His Virgin Mother. His birth at Bethlehem was from all normal appear-

ances a perfectly natural birth. It is this event, the very center of religious history that is lovingly and beautifully portrayed in the Christmas Chapel.

The most striking characteristic of Christ's birth was the absence of all earthly pomp and ceremony and the superabundance of poverty and all that poverty entails. The Jews by misunderstanding the Scriptural promise of the Redeemer made by God to Adam in Paradise had the impression that their Savior was to come with great pomp, power and solemnity. When they saw His poverty they were disappointed. The bottom fell out of their world. The note of gladness at Bethlehem cannot be anything but a contradiction unless we joyously accept the Suffering Christ. Jesus was often to say later on in His life that His Kingdom was not of this world. Look at Him at the time of His birth! A shepherd's shed is His shelter; a crib, His cradle; swaddling clothes are His garments; dumb animals provided the perfume and were the witnesses of His advent into the world. Poverty and hard work and want marked Him as a Man apart!

For the backdrop of the Christmas Chapel scene Father Dobberstein chose a mountain. On the very top of the mountain stands a lonely ram which is the symbol of the sinner. The rams are the reprobates on the Last day of Judgment. According to the language of Jesus, He will then forever reject them for not accepting or obeying Him as their Shepherd.

Farther down on the mountain side and to the left is another sheep, the image of docility, the symbol of the saint. It is hearkening to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who is calling it to Himself and away from the dangerous doings of the sinful world.

Still further down is a third sheep, in the attitude of drinking from a refreshing, cooling fountain, which reminds us of the Good Shepherd's promise to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, that He had the water to give abundantly to those who asked. This water would unflinchingly slake the drinker's thirst completely, fully and forever.

Still further down is a fourth sheep, lying in perfect repose, and fixing its affectionate gaze upon the Divine Child in the crib. And that Child seems pleased, nay thrilled, by the innocent animal's attention.

Still further down and to the right stands a somewhat sombre and hard-looking individual. He is dressed in a sheepskin coat, and has a horn of plenty in his hand. He is the hireling shepherd, that self-centered, self-absorbed, self-interested person, as described in the Gospel, who thinks only of his wages, and has but little care, or no care at all for the sheep. His whole concern is his salary and thus he neglects

his flock, and lets it be scattered and devoured by the wolves. Such shepherds are a curse to the Church and a bane to society. Instead of feeding their charges they wantonly devour the substance of those whom they should be feeding.

In the ornamental trimming of the chapel's base, is an inbuilt agate, which the builder found on the Canadian side of Lake Superior. He had it cut and polished; and it has, as the observer will notice, the shape of a little heart. A gush of blood seems to be spreading over and into it from the upper edge, as if it were under the influence of some deep emotion of love—a fitting symbol of that great love of God which gave us our Savior. It brings to mind the words of the Gospel, "So much did God love the world that He gave us His only-begotten Son, that every one who believes in Him, may not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16.

"Give Me thy heart," is the urgent request of a merciful God, as mentioned in the Scriptures, to everyone for whom He made Himself God, and for whom He died. Will you not listen, kind reader, and lay your heart both willing and gladly, at the feet of the little Jesus in the crib?

Now let us ask those who are inclined to be critical not to be scandalized at the gorgeously rich setting which is here given the destitute little Redeemer of the world in His stable. That holy poverty of His is well worth all the treasures, the transfiguration and the glorification which can be given it. Besides, the rich surroundings of the Savior in the Christmas Chapel are the symbol of His expected rebirth in your soul. It is altogether fitting that that temple should be embellished, not only with all that we, but also with all that divine grace, can give it.

THE GROTTO KEEPS GOING AND GROWING

There is a Restaurant on the Grotto grounds. It is famous for its home cooked meals. Again if a large group is planning to eat at the restaurant it is suggested that you write or call: Rev L. H. Greving, Grotto of the Redemption, West Bend, Iowa 50597. Tel. 515-887-2371.

In St. Peter and Paul's Church adjacent to the Grotto is Father Dobberstein's finest work—the Christmas chapel. Two other attractions have been added to the Church. In 1964 new faceted stain glass windows telling the story of the redemption were installed. In 1973 a twenty-two foot high, hand carved bird-eye maple altar was placed into the sanctuary of the Church. This altar won first place at the Chicago Worlds Fair in 1893. This altar originally was in St. Joseph's Church at Carroll, Iowa. When St. Joseph's Church was torn down in the fall of 1972 Father Greving procured the altar. He removed all the old varnish and refinished it. He high-lighted the wood carving with 23 karat gold-leafing.

Further plans call for an eight foot bronze statue of Father Paul Dobberstein on an ornamental pedestal on the Grotto grounds. When Father Greving was asked when this will be completed he said, "I don't know. Come next year and see how we are coming. And then come again in ten years. Maybe twenty years will see it completed. But, really the life of Christ is never completed. Anything that we can do to embellish it and make it more beautiful and attractive is our privilege."

A slide presentation of a tour through the Grotto using 25 professionally taken slides and a half hour Cassette recording by Father Greving is available by writing to Rev. L. H. Greving, Grotto of the Redemption, West Bend, Iowa 50597. These slides sell for \$5.00 and \$3.25 for the Cassette recording.

Since the death of Father Paul Dobberstein in 1954 the Grotto has been expanding under the direction of Father Louis Greving who for 8 years was assistant to Father Dobberstein before his death. Under Father Greving's supervision the mountain of Calvary was completed. On top of this forty foot mountain is a replica of Michaelangelo's famous Pieta—Mary holding in her lap the lifeless body of her Son. A white cloth drapes the cross. This cloth represents the shroud into which Our Blessed Lord was wrapped before His burial. At night Calvary is illuminated with a spot light. Since 1954 two other Grottos have been added. They are the Grotto of Bethlehem and the Grotto of Nazareth.

Father Greving has added several features to the Grotto which makes it more meaningful. There are free systematic tours through the Grotto every hour on the hour from June 1 to October 15. Soft chimes pealing throughout the Grottos give an air of reverence to the whole structure. After every hourly tour a twenty minute geological lecture is given in an air-conditioned Rock Display Studio. There is no admission charge for either the tour or the Rock Display lecture.

For almost 20 years Father Greving and his workmen have been cutting and polishing agates from all over the world. These are set into cement on the exterior walls of the 50 x 30 Rock Display Studio and the 60 x 50 Curio Shop. This display of agates is the largest display of its kind in the world.

Over 100,000 tourists visit the Grotto annually. Although there is no admission charge for seeing the Grotto, visitors are requested to leave a free-will donation so that construction of the Grotto can go on. Free over-night camping with electrical hook-ups are available in the camp area of the Grotto grounds. Ten huge 1000 watt mercury vapor spot lights illuminate the whole Grotto until 11:00 o'clock every evening. Many people stay over night at West Bend to the Grotto at night. There is an 18 unit modern Motel one block north of the Grotto. During the summer months it is suggested you call for reservations. Call or write: West Bend Motel, West Bend, Iowa 50597 Tel. 515-887-3611.



J. M. Dobberstein

GROTTO OF THE REDEMPTION



Father Louis Greving

Father Greving was the assistant to Father Dobberstein for eight years before his death. He is now pastor at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, and in charge of the Grotto.

