

# ★ ★ “O Starry Night” ★ ★

From the Desk of Mother Mary Wendy:

*“Whoa, take’er easy there, Pilgrim,”* said John Wayne to Jimmy Stewart in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, a classic old Hollywood Western. If you haven’t seen the movie, I suggest you curl up with a blanket and a big bowl of popcorn and relish a story that epitomizes one man’s courage, humility, sacrifice, and goodness, even when all he holds dear is at stake.

I love Westerns and the Wild West. Our mission this past October brought back vivid memories of my days in Catholic elementary school studying American History. I remember my father watching all the old Westerns, and practicing his shot with a pistol he’d had from the time he was a kid. As a child I loved everything my dad loved, in fact, I thought my dad looked just like John Wayne.

I also remember my Irish teacher, Sr. Mary Annette, teaching us to sing, *Oh’ Home on the Range, where the deer and the antelope play, where seldom is heard a discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day*. Who would have thought that I as a religious sister raised in sunny Florida, and who lived many years in Sicily, would one day meet a man who embodied the essence of that old cowboy song?

I met Gap Pucci on our first missionary tour of Wyoming back in 1999. He is the last of the original cowboy outfitters, who took sportsmen high up into the Teton Mountains in search of wild elk, deer, moose, and bear. His 100-year old cabin is almost more museum than house with every room full of unique, memorable treasures, each with a story behind it. He has cavalry boots and old western military saddles, antique cow bells, a potbelly stove and several antique rifles. The most impressive room of all is his den filled with the skins of bears and moose, elk and ermine.

But my favorite part about Gap Pucci is his deep and abiding Sicilian faith. He built outdoor Stations of the Cross and displays a beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother that came from his family in Sicily. He even taught his prized Morgan stallions to bow down before Jesus in an outdoor manger scene.

Twenty years ago, near midnight, with only the full moon as light, I hiked up a steep hill behind Gap’s house to see his Stations of the Cross. Wearing only sandals and no socks I climbed through a foot of snow to admire the beauty of each station, shimmering against a sky lit up by stars. But what was even more striking than the velvet night sky and the stations, was to see Gap, the ole cowboy, standing so tall and proud, with such love in his eyes, for having built not only the stations, but a huge cross that shined with lights for all the Teton Range to see.

To cap off that wintery night, Gap showed us the Nativity scene he placed under a big pine tree next to his house. He shared the story of an abandoned baby

*Gap and Starless Knight,  
a Morgan Stallion,*



*kneel before Our  
Lord in the Manger.*

elk calf which found a way in through his fence. That calf lay down at the manger scene and refused to leave his place. Gap had to nurse him until he was well enough to go back into the wild alone. He believed that elk was taking cover at the feet of the baby Jesus, seeking shelter from the menacing wolves. As the psalmist says, “All the earth worships you; they sing praises to your name.” (Ps. 66:4) Merry Christmas to all and thank you for your kind support.

*~ Mother Mary Wendy*



*Mother Wendy visits with  
Gap Pucci at his mountain cabin.*

# IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD

Typically, when nuns get on an airplane the passengers breathe a sigh of relief. "We're in God's hands now," they'll say. Well, things haven't changed much in the last 150 years except for how we travel. Billy the Kid, a notorious criminal, was about to "take matters into his own hands" and rob a stagecoach, until he realized that Sr. Blandina was traveling onboard that coach and he called off the whole attack. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief because they knew, "hands down" that this was the Lord's doing!



*Sr. Blandina,  
Servant of God*

It seems that Sr. Blandina was always a "tool in the right hand of the Lord." At the age of four her family moved from Italy to Ohio and by age sixteen she joined the Sisters of Charity. At twenty-two, Sr. Blandina was on a train alone to Colorado to teach children in public schools.

Of all the tales told about Sr. Blandina, the most intriguing came at the hands of outlaws. Sr. Blandina once stepped in to nurse one of Billy's gang members who nearly died of a gunshot wound. Then she stopped Billy from killing the four doctors who refused to treat him. She even visited Billy in jail.

When she wasn't thwarting outlaws, she was founding schools and hospitals in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and lending a helping hand to the poor, the orphaned and the lowly. All her work has earned her the title, "The Servant of God of New Mexico," and her cause for canonization is steadily moving forward.

## FAITH OUT WEST

There is still a "wildness" to the West. Gone are the stagecoaches and gun battles at the OK Corral, but there is still a fight for the spiritual soul of the people. Our Uber rides to and from the airport were a testament to that. We learned that Salt Lake City and parts of Idaho are well over 90% Mormon. We learned about the man-made structure of their church and their understanding of the Bible, which is quite a bit different from our own, and of course we know that the Mormons do not believe Jesus is Divine.

### Q & A Answer

*Both Buffalo Bill  
Cody and John  
Wayne wished  
to die as  
Catholics and  
received the  
sacraments just  
before death.*



**The Grand Teton Mountains**

Yet, in our travels to the grocery stores, gas stations and cattle farms we also witnessed the strong commitment to family and faith which the Mormons have, and we found common ground in that way. One generous and kind Mormon rancher even discounted the elk meat we bought. He must have admired the witness of our faith.

It showed us that the hand of God can bring mutual esteem and respect in all situations. And though the number of Catholics in the area is quite few, and their Catholic churches are small, these Catholic settlers live and work in rural farming communities with strong family values and an ethic of hard work.

They cling to their faith more strongly because of the struggle. And so, life for them bumps along like a covered wagon on the dusty trail in the fresh cold mountain air of the Teton Valley.



# AND SPEAKING OF MISSIONARY WORK

Did you know you don't have to be physically present be a missionary? Have you ever heard of the gift of bilocation? Both Padre Pio and Sr. Alfonsa (Mother Wendy's spiritual mother) had this special gift of bilocation.

A priest in Sicily tells the story. He was in a crisis in his priesthood, to the point where he could barely function. One night he lay in bed, frozen with anxiety, when suddenly he heard the rustle of clothing and the unmistakable clink of rosary beads. There was a woman's voice praying the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be over him and then he felt Holy Water sprinkled on his face. Instantly, a profound peace came over him and his crisis ended.



*Sr. Alfonsa, Servant of God*

A few months later, this same priest visited the Motherhouse of the Handmaids of Reparation in Messina and the Mother General asked if he would like to meet a very special sister. She took him into their Church where he met Sr. Alfonsa, who suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and was confined to a wheelchair. He was startled by her big smile, because it felt like she recognized him. While he was asking her to pray for his parishioners, Sr. Alfonsa reached out, tapped him on the elbow and said, "Father, the sister that night was me." Father hadn't spoken to anyone about what happened that night so he knew she was the one who appeared to him. She proceeded to give him three prophecies which would occur in his lifetime.

A few months after Sr. Alfonsa died on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1994, the priest came to the Motherhouse to give a retreat and he shared one of the prophecies. Sr. Alfonsa had told him he would begin a lay missionary group dedicated to reparation and aid to the poor. This prophecy was fulfilled and he already had 250 people who were members of a flourishing apostolate.

So, you see, the Lord will send out His missionary messengers where and how He chooses, all we need to do is have faith and continue to pray.

## *Natural Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park*



## *What Happened When the Lord put the World in Time Out*

*In the month that the world became quiet  
With missions and travel on hold  
We took stock of all of our "home" work  
Lord! The projects were there to behold*

*The deck needed fixing, the berm was a mess  
Our barn floor was sagging, a source of distress  
So, we took up our hammers, our crowbar and spades  
And we worked and we worked for what seemed like an Age!*

*One board on the deck turned to thirty...plus three  
While the berm soaked up mulch like a sponge by the sea!  
The barn was a puzzle to decipher and fix  
The wood we laid down, what an incredible mix!*

*The deck is now finished and it turned out just fine  
The boards are not bowing, how truly divine  
And our berm, once a catchall for weeds and for vines  
Flows over with flowers, what a miracle in time!*

*And the barn floor is sturdy, no more holes in the floor  
It could handle whatever we put there to store  
Thank goodness the Lord gave us this time to repair  
All the projects Mother Wendy said, "Someday we'll get there."*

*Wherever you take us Lord, there we will go  
We thank you for everything, we praise you and know  
That no matter the task or the chore that we share  
You are there by our side with your mercy and care.*

*Written by Sr. Mary Augustine*





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## *The Sisters of Reparation Christmas Newsletter*

*From the Desk of Mother Mary Wendy McMenemy.*

*A Christmas Novena will be prayed for your intentions.*

*Praise Him you  
highest heavens  
and you waters  
above the heavens.*

*- Psalm 148:4*



## **Howdy Catholics!**

*The spread of the faith in the Wild West.*



*Gap Pucci, the Catholic Mountain  
Man of the West ...*

**Don't be stumped,  
with Wild West Q & A!**



**Sr. Blandina**

*...the Nun who  
challenged  
Billy the Kid.*

*Sr. Mary Augustine speaks  
about Divine Mercy out West.*

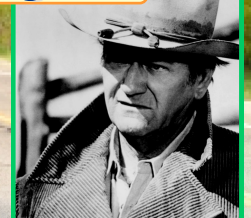
**BILLY THE KID.  
\$500 REWARD.**

I will pay \$500 reward to any person or persons who will capture William Bonny, alias The Kid, and deliver him to any sheriff of New Mexico. Satisfactory proofs of identity will be required.

LEW. WALLACE,  
Governor of New Mexico.



*Answer inside.*



**What do Buffalo Bill  
Cody and John Wayne  
have in common?**

*Hint: It doesn't have to do  
with being cowboys.*