

# ‘Mary Belongs To Everybody’: Our Lady Of Perpetual Help Church Dedicates Statue Of The Blessed Mother

*By Karie Angell Luc on August 20, 2021*



Mary Kate Auer, 14, of Glenview and a freshman at Loyola Academy of Wilmette, places the rose crown on the Mary statue. “It means a lot because Mary is my confirmation name,” Mary Kate said. “I’m so happy.” (Karie Angell Luc/Journal photo)

The Statue of the Blessed Mother was dedicated on a banner Sunday morning, Aug. 15 after 9 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) Church in Glenview (1775 Grove St.).

To commemorate OLPH’s centennial year in 2019, a group of parishioners purchased a statue of Mary, the Blessed Mother, as a crowning element in the Hellerman Garden.

The garden was a centennial gift by donors, the Hellerman family, OLPH parishioners.

And while the Hellerman Garden was dedicated in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented OLPH from hosting a similar dedication ceremony for the statue.

The statue was carved by Italian artist Franco Spagnoli of Spagnoli Marble Works in Carrara, Italy.

Carrara marble has been used by sculptors since ancient Rome, most notably Michelangelo, for his sculpture of David.

The statue of the Blessed Mother was shipped from Italy and installed at OLPH in June of 2020.

“In the pandemic, we’ve been focusing a lot on hardship, suffering, loss, isolation, and we had the statue commissioned in the fall of 2019 and then came the big shutdown,” said Rev. Jeremiah Boland, OLPH pastor.

“We were following the process of the carving of Mary and the sculptor completed it and she (Mary) was one of the last shipments out of the port of Rome,” Boland said.

The Mary sculpture was shipped by boat.

“Had that process of getting her (Mary) to the port in Italy been delayed two or three days,” Boland said, “if she (Mary) hadn’t gotten on that trip, she’d still be in the studios somewhere in Tuscany.

“Italy shut down completely, and that port didn’t open for months,” Boland said.

“There’s a certain providence that Mary was going to get here,” Boland added.

“Nothing was going to stop her.”

The Statue of the Blessed Mother in the Hellerman Garden quickly became a popular attraction for prayer and reflection during the pandemic 24 hours a day. At night, the statue is illuminated.

“Our church was closed (due to the pandemic), you couldn’t go into the church, and there would be dozens and dozens of people that would come (to the Hellerman Garden),” Boland said.

“If you had to pick the timing, it couldn’t have been more significant to people.

“It (the statue) is already a sensational addition to our beautiful campus,” Boland said.

Parishioner Mark Mitchell of Glenview came up with the idea of a prayer book especially for the Aug. 15 occasion.

A complimentary pocket-sized “Prayers to Our Blessed Mother in the Hellerman Garden” booklet was offered to all who attended the dedication. Copies are still available at OLPH.

The prayers in the book were compiled by Mitchell and Jennifer Farber of Glenview, dedication event coordinator.

Mitchell recalled the genesis of the prayer book.

“I thought, you know, a lot of the people come to the garden but they don’t necessarily know, ‘How do I pray to Mary?’ and the answer, ‘However you want,’ usually isn’t sufficient,” Mitchell said.

“So the prayer book began essentially as a user’s manual.

“The prayer book is important any day,” Mitchell said.

“Having a written prayer in front of you is a great way to center yourself.

“It channels your thought,” Mitchell added, “and it guides your energy to a way of asking, or a way of presenting yourself to the Blessed Mother.”

The event included a procession and a crowning of fresh roses for Mary. Refreshments were served outdoors courtesy of the OLPH Women's Club.

"It was an impressive turnout," Farber said.

People sang and prayed together during the 20 minute ceremony on a breezy 73 degree day in a shaded garden that bridges the church and school.

"It definitely gives me hope," Farber said, adding the Mary statue instills interfaith connectivity.

"It really has made a difference in our faith life and I think for other people in the community too.

"She's like a magnet, a love magnet," Farber said. "She is a bridge.

"Mary belongs to everybody."



Deacon Christopher Weiland of Glenview presides during the Dedication of the Statue of the Blessed Mother in the Hellerman Garden on Sunday, Aug. 15, 2021 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Glenview. (Karie Angell Luc/Journal photo)

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