

Ocean View man sharing Christian tradition of the scapular around the world

By Susan Canfora | Staff Reporter

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When Andrew Maggio, a man of faith, made a phone call, hoping to bless his sick brother-in-law, he never expected to begin a ministry of providing rosaries and scapulars by the thousands.

“I had no idea it would grow like this. I never went to Catholic school, except for first grade. I always went to church. It just happened,” the 85-year-old Ocean View resident said, explaining that he had contacted a veterans’ hospital about his brother-in-law and asked that the chaplain there give the sick man a scapular — a length of cloth suspended from both the front of back of the shoulders, worn to remind those who wear them of their commitment to the Christian life.

Christians who observe the tradition trust the scapular as a sign of salvation and believe it offers protection in danger.

“When I called that hospital, I asked the chaplain, ‘Can you put a scapular around my brother-in-law’s neck and tell him I’m praying for him?’ When the priest told him, he had eye movement. But the



Andrew Maggio receives a shipment of rosaries that he sends out to places all over the country.

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father said he didn't have any scapulars or rosaries. I said, 'I will make sure you get some immediately,' and I sent them to him. The father said, 'I have a counterpart in Boston who needs them at a V.A. hospital there,' Maggio said.

So he sent more, and as the ministry grew, shipped them to states and countries including Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands and Medjugorje, a town in southwestern Bosnia, near Croatia, where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is said to have appeared.

Maggio has made sure thousands of school children have received them.

With the help of his fiancée, Lillian, fellow parishioners at St. Ann Parish in Bethany Beach and others who are partnering with him, small bags are filled with a rosary, scapular and literature explaining each, as well as how to pray the rosary.

"I was doing this all with my own money. Then we went to where we were having the printing done, and we were told there are organizations that would help us," he said, remembering talking to members of the American Legion in Ocean City, Md., and being surprised and grateful for a \$1,000 donation.

"A man at the American Legion said, 'I haven't seen one of those since I was a kid,'" Maggio said about scapulars.

"I'm really grateful for their help and for the help of the parishioners. I need help with this stuff. I get the materials together and take everything to church, and the parishioners take them and put them into these little sandwich bags, and we send them out," he said, crediting Michael Middendorf and Louis Lomagro, who attend St. Ann, as well as Benchmark Printing in New York for not charging him, the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion and other supporters.

"I get rosaries from California, Texas — all over the country. I have 30,000 rosaries in my dining room," said Maggio, a native of Baltimore who retired from the insurance business and who explains his mission on his website, at www.rosariesandscapulars.org.

Some of the rosaries he disperses are made by nuns who belong to Our Lady's Rosary Makers, based in Louisville, Ky. He also gets them from those who make them and provide them specifically to Maggio.



“They’re the most beautiful rosaries I ever saw. It was so great. We’ve hit 150 V.A. hospitals, and now we’re on our second way around. We go into high schools. We gave away rosaries and scapulars at Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School in Ocean Pines (Md.). We went to Christ the Teacher School and delivered 700 there,” said Maggio, who has lived in Ocean View since 1999.

A strong believer in the power of a scapular to promise protection, Maggio said anyone wearing one will go to heaven and was quick to share stories that back up his belief, including one about a storm at sea years ago. He said 40-foot waves buffeted a ship, making passengers fear for their lives. Then, he said, a young Catholic sailor took off his shirt, removed his scapular, kissed it and threw it into the ocean. The sea calmed, the passengers were saved and a wave brought the scapular back to the sailor, Maggio said.

“There is no question scapulars protect you. Our Blessed Mother said, ‘One day my rosary and scapular will save the world.’ There are miracles — seven or eight miracles — in the books I give out that explain about scapulars and rosaries,” he said, recalling an experience he never forgot.

He was driving a little convertible, following a truck that was pulling a cement mixer.

“I said, ‘I believe. I go to church. God, show me a sign.’ No sooner I got the words out of my mouth when I heard a voice say, ‘Get in the other lane.’ That cement mixer flew off the truck and landed where my car would have been if I hadn’t gotten in the other lane. I said, ‘I’ll never ask for another miracle.’ I have worn a scapular for years,” he said.

Scapulars are generally brown and made of wool. Anyone allergic to wool can carry it in a pocket or purse, he said.

On one end of the scapular are the words “Whosoever dies clothed in this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire,” and “A sign of salvation” is printed on the other end.

Maggio said his fiancée is helpful and supportive of the effort.

“She’s been great. She said, ‘If it’s God calling you to do it, we’re going to do it,’” said Maggio, who has spent thousands of dollars buying rosaries — including those made with red, white and blue beads for veterans — and scapulars.

“We are targeting everyone,” Maggio said, adding that anyone interested in helping, or requesting scapulars and rosaries, will find contact information on his website.

“We started with the church, then V.A. hospitals, then schools, and even Boys Town. We are hitting them all,” he said.

“I’d like to see scapulars in every school in the country, and I think we can do it.”



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