

He Always Loved
Our Lady

He Always Loved Our Lady

By Barry Hanratty

On August 31, 1986, Fr. Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A., died in Worcester, Massachusetts, of a disease that attacked both his physical and mental faculties. He was 74 years old. Fr. Pelletier will always be remembered by those interested in Garabandal for the enormous contribution he made in furthering the cause mostly by his writings but in other ways as well. His best known book *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal* has gone through five printings and is one of the two most popular on the events. He is also internationally known for two books he wrote on Fatima, *The Sun Danced at Fatima*, a best-seller, and *Fatima Hope of the World*.

On April 24, 1912, in Winchendon, Massachusetts, Joseph Alfred Pelletier first saw the light of day and was one of eight children (three died as infants) born to Elizabeth (McGlinchey) and Dr. Alfred Pelletier. Dr. Pelletier, a country doctor for more than 50 years was dearly loved by

his patients. He would tell them that taking care of their souls was more important than their bodily health and would send them to see a priest. Every evening the family gathered around the dining room table to recite the rosary together.

Young Joseph was a normal, healthy, well-adjusted boy with a lively sense of humor who enjoyed sports as well as his academic studies. He played basketball in both high school and college but his best sport was tennis. The Pelletiers had their own tennis court at home which gave him the opportunity to play often and hone his skills.

At the age of 14, his mother died and Dr. Pelletier remarried. There would be seven more Pelletiers (one again died in infancy) from this second marriage making a total of 15.

Joseph went to Assumption Prep, the preparatory school to Assumption College in Worcester. In those days, all the courses at the school were taught in French and while the Pelletiers did speak some French at home, Joe was tutored by his sister, Betty, in order to pass the rigid entrance examination. Later he would become

Joe Pelletier was a 20-year-old senior at Worcester College when this picture was taken in 1932.



proficient in Italian and have a more than adequate command of Spanish.

Upon graduation from Assumption Prep, he entered the college and with the exception of a few years in the mid 50's when he was associate pastor at St. Anne's parish in Fiskdale, Massachusetts, while a reconstruction program was being completed at the college that had been severely damaged by a tornado in 1953, he was to spend his whole life associated with this one institution.

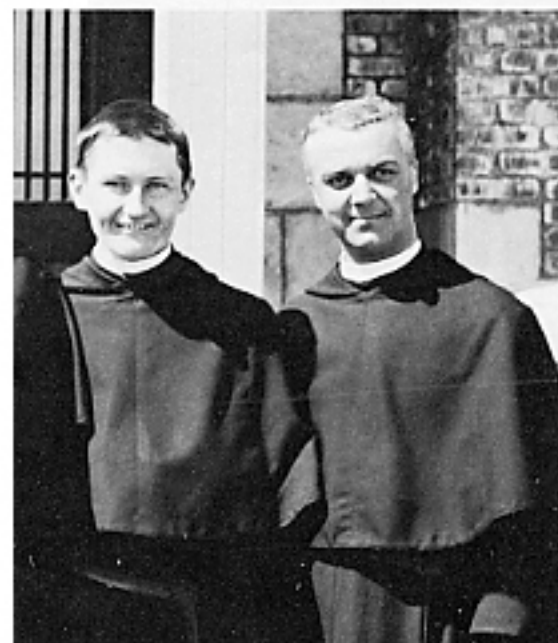
Call to the Priesthood

Young Joe Pelletier was an altar boy for many years, but thought more about following in his father's footsteps and pursue a medical profession than enter the religious life. However, he did have a special devotedness that his college classmates noticed and they referred to him as "Holy Joe."

Then one weekend during his senior year, he came home and said he felt he had a vocation to the priesthood. He began to inquire and considered the Jesuits since he had had



Left, a well-rounded student, the future Father Joe combined athletics with his academic studies. He played on both the basketball and tennis teams at Worcester College. Below, after his studies in Rome, seminarian Joe Pelletier (second from left) returned to the college.



an uncle who was a Jesuit, the first American Jesuit to die in India. Another uncle who headed the Propagation of the Faith in the Archdiocese of Boston for many years, was a secular priest. He finally decided on the Augustinian Assumptionists, an Order that had its origins in France.

In 1937, he was ordained priest in Rome where he received his Baccalaureate and Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Angelicum Pontifical Institute. He also received a master's degree in sociology from Boston College. At various times during his tenure at Assumption, he taught sociology and religion, was athletic director, tennis coach, and Dean of Students.

Garabandal

Fr. Pelletier was always interested in Marian apparitions especially Fatima and through his writings and research became an authority. He was also Diocesan Director of the Blue Army in Worcester. His involvement in Garabandal started around 1968-69 when he first heard of the events. He

Those Who Knew Him

Anne Gray, Worcester, Massachusetts (Fr. Pelletier's sister)



What a loving, caring and very priestly priest Father Joe was. He loved to speak of Our Lady and did so at every given opportunity, and he loved the rosary.

This was truly a family tradition not only as a family nightly around the dining room table, but also in the car with my father, a country doctor, who loved to have us accompany him on his daily calls, when we again recited the rosary. We continued this practice with dear Father Joe.

Literally, on our father's knees, we had our first French lessons and learned our prayers and catechism, all in French. Our mother, though Irish, had been the French teacher to whom Dad had gone to learn English. They were both special. It was to her [our mother] that Father Joe attributed his vocation.

Joey Lomangino, Huntington, New York (founder of Our Lady of Mount Carmel de Garabandal, Inc.)



Father Joe Pelletier and I met in Lindenhurst, New York in the late 1960s.

As part of his initial research on the Garabandal apparitions, he wanted to interview me and

verify the information he had been collecting. I was happy to meet him as I knew of him through his various writings on Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima.

Working together, we became close friends. He came to my home many times to work on his Garabandal books, articles and leaflets, to interview the visionaries when they were in New York and to detail new information on Garabandal as it developed. Together we went to Rome to speak to the Church authorities about these apparitions. For years we travelled together giving conferences across America, Canada, into Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Spain, Portugal and the Holy Land. We went on annual pilgrimages together where he would instruct the people about Garabandal right in that small Spanish village

itself. He accompanied me when we attended the yearly Family Rosary Rally on Long Island, New York, where he would always speak so beautifully about Mary.

It is difficult to put briefly the impressions Father Joe left on me. He was a totally committed Marian priest, absolutely obedient to lawful Church authority. He was painstakingly thorough and accurate in every aspect of his work. He accepted misunderstanding and criticism of his writings and his belief in Garabandal in a spirit of meekness and humility.

He loved the priesthood and extended himself on behalf of brother priests wherever we travelled throughout the world. He was a man consecrated to Mary, who worked entirely for her, and distinguished himself to Catholics worldwide as a solid priest who spoke about Mary when it was not fashionable to do so.

His great love for people and desire to save souls was the reason he worked so tirelessly to spread her Messages given at Garabandal. Father Joe will always be in my thoughts and prayers as one of the outstanding champions of Our Lady.

Bill Kuhn, Bradenton, Florida (Fr. Pelletier's editor)



In 1969, Fr. Pelletier and Joey introduced me and my wife to Garabandal. Two trips through Garabandal (1970 and 1972) reinforced the enthusiastic impact of

Joey, and the gentle, compassionate, steady élan of the inquiring mind of a prayerful Marian priest, Fr. Pelletier. His religious intensity constantly shone through his urbanity and regularly tied this world to God in soft words and loving service.

Father Joe's personal involvement in honoring Jesus and the Mother of God was inspiring and full of confidence. By permitting me to review his manuscripts and to discuss with him the phenomena of Garabandal, he led me much more deeply into understanding and faith. He encouraged and supported every effort to wring the true meaning of both the silences and the confusions from the accounts of Garabandal. He was a persevering and persistent sifter of facts from

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immediately began to make an in-depth study, carefully examining all the documents he could lay his hands on and interviewing the visionaries and other key people associated with the events. He soon became convinced that the apparitions were authentic and with the encouragement and financial support of Joey Lomangino and the New York Garabandal Center, he published *God Speaks at Garabandal* in 1970 followed by *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal* in 1971. He was also a major contributing writer for *NEEDLES* magazine (now *GARABANDAL*) and authored leaflets and booklets on the

events. In addition to his writings, he lectured on Garabandal and for many years accompanied Joey Lomangino on his annual promotional tours of Ireland and other countries.

From 1970 to 1982, he was spiritual director for The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel yearly pilgrimage to the shrines of Europe which always included a visit to Garabandal.

In 1974, Fr. Pelletier's active involvement at Assumption College ended and he devoted most of his time to writing and research. He managed to complete the manuscript for another book on Garabandal





Above, the Pelletier clan wouldn't dream of having anyone other than Father Joe perform their marriage ceremonies. Here at the wedding of his sister, Anne Gray, we see from left, sister Evelyn, Father Joe, Anne and their beloved father, Dr. Alfred Pelletier. Left, in 1973, Father Joe was one of the 14 priests who concelebrated the nuptial Mass in which Conchita Gonzalez was married to Patrick Keena. From left are, Father Joe, visionary Mari Loli Mazon [later La Fleur], Conchita and Patrick, and Joey Lomangino who was best man.

which was not published.

In 1975, he suffered a heart attack and from then on his health was never the same again. In the early 1980's, he began to decline and in 1985 was hospitalized on six different occasions suffering from fainting spells (twice he had passed out while celebrating Mass). In June, 1986, he took a turn for the worse and was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital in Worcester where he remained, with the exception of a short period at a nursing home, until his death.

A Devoted Priest

Fr. Joseph Pelletier will best be remembered as an author and anyone

Those Who Knew Him (continued from page 5)

fiction, and a patient mentor. He made his points quietly and he respected contrary opinions. He was a good and faithful priest, an inspiration to all with whom he came in contact, a loving friend.

Mari Loli La Fleur, Haverhill, Massachusetts (Garabandal visionary)



I thought he was a very nice priest and he loved the Blessed Mother very much. He tried very hard to talk about the Blessed Mother and her Messages. Since I knew him he spent all his time doing that. I loved him very much and felt very bad when I went to see him [in the hospital]. I tried to talk to him but I don't think he understood me. He was in a coma and I felt bad.

Rev. François Turner, O.P., Blois, France (fellow author and historian of Garabandal with Fr. Pelletier)



I had collaborated with Fr. Pelletier since 1968 and sent him about 200 documents to be used by him in his books and articles on Garabandal. We met several times: at Garabandal, Paris, Lourdes and Worcester. I also translated two of his books into French.

Through his life, his correspondence and his way of considering persons and life, he has given me an unforgettable and lasting example of a religious, a priest, and gifted writer who was genuinely, profoundly humble. Nothing in his letters, in his way of writing or speaking could let me guess that he had received high degrees from a prestigious university. His humility made him an excellent listener and an excellent collaborator in historical research.

The other quality, I dare say virtue, among others, which has given me a lesson which I have tried to follow, was his love of peace, his deep peacefulness of mind and heart. He never found any pleasure in the controversies, alas sometimes harsh and passionate, which have been raging in the Church. He would avoid them completely in public and tone them down as much as possible in private.

Dee DeBever, Perris, California (friend who received spiritual direction from Fr. Pelletier)



Over nine years ago I sent this quote to Father Joe: "You are the key that opened the door of love for me." All of the roots of my spiritual growth are in him. Through his example, his holy priesthood, his love for the Eucharist and Mary, I learned the lessons of his many virtues, to stay at peace and pray always. Father Joe became my channel, my intercessor, confidant and my dear friend. Via phone, letters and my yearly visits, we shared joys as well as disappointments.

My many chats with Father Joe in the spring of 1986 will always be for me truly memorable treasures. During his final five days, I received more graces. By that time, he was in a coma but being with him, talking to him and touching him were profound experiences. "Hail Mary... pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death" and "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit" really came alive for me. I thank God for being one of the many thousands whose lives were touched by dear Father Joe.

Rev. Gerald Farrell, M.M., Brooklyn, New York (since his ordination, Fr. Farrell's missionary work has been chiefly in Korea and the U.S.)



I knew Fr. Pelletier since 1975, chiefly as an apostle of Garabandal to fellow priests. Father had a gift of combining careful research with his own deep Marian devotion in a way that convinced all of us. We left his books in our library and they were read by a number of priest guests who were then anxious to learn more about Garabandal. Since our house in the Providence diocese was only a one-hour drive from Father's residence, I took visiting priests several times during the next two years to meet him and question him further. I learned that his gift was for the oral as well as the written word because all of them left his home convinced. During

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A picture that says it all—a Eucharistic and Marian priest. Father Joe during the consecration of the Mass in the Chapel of the Apparitions at Fatima. Below, this 1980 photo of Fr. Pelletier shows how much he aged in just seven years (see page 6) due to his poor health.

who has ever read any of his works, especially his earlier ones before his health began to decline, sensed the mark of a true scholar who knew his subject well. He was a tireless and thorough researcher, exacting in

details. His style was clear, well-ordered and easily readable for all. Being a former teacher, he sometimes used repetition as a way of emphasizing points he felt were of particular importance.

But those who knew Father Joe personally will remember him as much more than just a writer. He was a devoted priest who took his religious vows very seriously. He loved his priesthood and he lived it. He was also intensely loyal to the Church. In the aftermath of Vatican II, a period of change and sometimes difficult readjustment, especially for priests of Father Joe's generation, he never complained or took issue with any of the directives coming from Rome. He felt that his vow of obedience compelled him to accept and study thoroughly all the changes which he correctly interpreted as an outgrowth of the Church's tradition and not an overthrow.

His loyalty was also characterized by his avoidance of anything that would bring scandal to the Church either in what he said or what he wrote. He always handled sensitive situations with the greatest possible delicacy choosing his words carefully so as not to be harsh, critical or judgmental.

In the wake of the Council and in the ensuing years, he was able to observe only too clearly the painful accuracy of what Our Lady predicted at Garabandal and what he himself termed the "crisis of the priesthood" and the "crisis of the Eucharist." This deeply distressed him and he saw in Our Lady whom he always loved, and the promises she made at both Fatima and Garabandal, the solution to the problems besetting the Church. He longed to see the great Miracle, the conversion of Russia, the Triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart and the promised era of peace.

He will see it all, but from a different vantage point.

There were a number of other qualities of Father Joe that served to edify those who knew him, and among them was his great purity which was reflected in both his words and in his actions.

Father Joe was by nature reserved but by no means dull or somber. On festive occasions, he was a willing and happy participant and the possessor of a fine wit. Toward the end of his life he seemed to become more withdrawn and introspective, but this was due more than anything else, to his ill health especially his loss of memory.

While he was not known as a Spiritual Director, he was, because of his background in theology and being so up-to-date on the directives and direction of the Church since the Council, capable of giving excellent spiritual advice.

Perhaps one of the most outstanding qualities of Fr. Joe Pelletier was his resignation in accepting God's holy will. Here's one example.

The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel pilgrimage in 1978 was similar to that of 1986 (see page 16) in that it went to almost all the shrines in Europe where Our Lady appeared over the last two centuries, including Fatima. Because of his love for Our Lady, Father Joe, who was tour spiritual director that year, eagerly looked forward to this particular trip. When the flight from New York landed in Brussels to begin the tour, everyone was able to pick up their luggage at "baggage claim" that is, everyone except Father Joe. As can happen, his luggage was mistakenly sent some place else. That meant leaving the itinerary list of all the hotels in which the tour would be staying with the airport officials in Brussels so that the lost luggage



A final farewell. Joey Lomangino kneels at the casket of Father Joe who is dressed in the traditional cassock and hood of the Augustian Assumptionists.

could be forwarded when it finally arrived.

The tour lasted 17 days and Father Joe's luggage arrived on the fifteenth or sixteenth day. During the whole time he had to wear the same clothes every day and live out of the small carry-on bag he was allowed to take with him on the flight over. Never once did he utter a complaint or show even the slightest ill humor. He understood God was asking him to make this sacrifice and he accepted.

Another example of this resignation came at the end of his life. Right up until a few weeks before he died, Father Joe believed he was going to get well. But then it became apparent to him that he was not getting better but that he was getting worse. About this time he was visited in the hospital by his provincial, Fr. Richard Brunelle, and Father Joe said to him, "You know, Dick, I think this is the cross the Lord wants me to bear at this time. It's not easy, but I accept it."

That was Father Joe, a priest in the fullest sense of the word and a true disciple of Our Lord Who asks His followers to take up their cross and walk in His footsteps.

Perhaps you who are reading these lines are in some way indebted to Fr. Joseph Pelletier as is the author of this article who first became a believer in Garabandal after reading one of his leaflets. Maybe you received a similar grace or perhaps after reading one of Father's books you came to love Our Lord and Our Blessed Lady a little more. Well, if that be the case, the best way you can show your appreciation is to pray for the repose of his soul. Maybe he has no need of our prayers but in the event he does, it would be the most fitting and meaningful way of expressing our gratitude and saying, "Thank you dear Father Joe!" □



Those Who Knew Him (continued from page 7)

our last year in Providence, a group of about 20 priests who came to join us in interceding for priests, requested that we invite Fr. Pelletier to speak to them about Garabandal. He was delighted with the opportunity and presented them with a slide show and talk that they, too, found convincing.

Even after his death, Fr. Pelletier's apostleship to priests continues. Shortly after my return to my mission in Korea three years ago, he sent me two cartons of his books on Garabandal. I have been giving them to missionary priests in Korea with the same results that I saw at Bethany House. I'm into the second carton now and I feel that with his new increased power of intercession the remaining books too will be received by the priests who read them.

Margie Kulik, Massapequa Park, New York (Joey Lomangino's secretary at the New York Garabandal Center for ten years)



Father Joe was a priest personified, a true friend, accepting, non-judgmental, always ready to bring out the best in a person. So often priests or lay persons get so involved in "apostolates" that they forget the needs of the people; not Father Joe. He cared for each person.

Whenever I called for a Mass to be

offered, he never failed to give his blessing over the phone. Father Joe will always be a "blessing in my life." His reward is surely heaven!

Richard Stanley, County Dublin, Ireland (National Director of the Irish Garabandal movement)



It was with great regret that the Garabandalists of Ireland received news of the death of Fr. Joseph Pelletier.

Fr. Pelletier along with Fr. Laffineur was one of the first priests to become involved in writing on Garabandal. He visited Ireland twice in the 1970s along with Joey [Lomangino]. One of his most impressive appearances was on Irish television's most important talk show when he and Joey introduced Garabandal, probably for the first time, to most Irish viewers.

One of the outstanding aspects of Fr. Pelletier was his scrupulous approach to accuracy of detail, nothing of hearsay, everything researched thoroughly and where possible the Spanish word(s) given for greater accuracy. Fr. Pelletier was also well-qualified in theology which, combined with a penetrating mind, gave added weight and authority to his books on Garabandal.

Perhaps it is fitting that we should end this tribute with an Irish prayer: *Ar dheis de go raibh a anam* (may his soul be with God). □

From the Writings of Father Joe

Compiled by Irene Dutra

Over the course of the years, from 1972 to 1981, Fr. Joseph Pelletier was the most prolific contributing writer for GARABANDAL Magazine (formerly called NEEDLES) with a total of 58 articles. The publishers will always be grateful to Father Joe for this great and generous contribution that added significantly to the integrity of the publication. In his articles, Father Joe's keen discerning mind explored the various aspects of the Garabandal Message, showing their relationship to Church doctrine. The following excerpts summarize his most important thoughts on the significance of Garabandal.

Garabandal, in its simplest terms, is the story of a faithful and forgiving God reaching out to His bewildered and suffering children to help them, not to punish them. The conditional chastisement of Garabandal must never be allowed to overshadow the main reason for God's intervention at that Spanish mountain village. That reason is love. This love reaches its peak in forgiveness, the love which

Former Fulbright Scholar, Irene Dutra, belongs to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Manhattan. She teaches English and develops educational computer software at Bronx Community College in New York.



Christ revealed on the cross.

* * *

... the message of Garabandal is very significant. It appears as a preventive antidote prepared by an all-wise and loving God in view of a spiritual tempest about to break upon the Church. Though in preparation for some years before the opening of the Ecumenical Council, Vatican II, in the fall of 1962, the storm only manifested itself in a serious way during the Council. That storm grew in fury during the Council and in the first few years after it. God anticipated all this and gave the remedy to His Church through the apparitions of Garabandal.... The Messages received through these apparitions gave us the answer to the problems that began to beset the Church. Mary and the rosary, the Eucharist and the priesthood, were among the major things that came under attack. [The doctrines of] purgatory and hell also suffered from the onslaught of some of the new thinking. All these points of Catholic doctrine were affirmed at Garabandal in one way or another.

* * *

Looking at the Message(s) of Garabandal from another point of view, we can say that it deals with two things: the end or purpose of Our

Lady's coming, which was the renewal of the Church or repentance and change of life which in the 1961 Message she stressed in a positive way: "First, that is, above all, we must lead good lives." Then, the means for attaining that end. All the other things mentioned in the Message are in one way or another, means directed toward aiding us to come to repentance and a holy life: prayer, the Eucharist, and sacrifice.

Prayer

Our Lady's plea for prayer is the most important part of her entire Garabandal Message. Prayer is indeed the great vitalizing factor of our spiritual life. If it is poor and inadequate, everything will be affected: the Sacraments, Penance and the Eucharist, simply will not produce in us the rich fruit Christ intended they should and every area of our Christian life will be weak and anemic.

* * *

We strengthen our feeble prayer immeasurably when we join it to that of Mary, when we ask her to present our petitions to her divine Son and intercede for us. We please our heavenly Father, for we are acknowledging and following His plan. Also, since His one desire is to give to us, for He is love and it is the nature of love to give, it delights Him, as it were, to be put in a position where He has to give because of the increased value of our prayer. That is the very reason He gave Mary to us as our Mother and perfect intercessor.

* * *

Our vocal prayers should normally involve thinking. The thinking can be about God, Jesus, Mary, or the words of the prayers we are saying, or the mysteries of the rosary, if we are reciting that prayer. But there must

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