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Arch

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statuary grouping of the Holy Family.

"The dream was so uncanny that I felt it was inspired (by God)," Behr said. "I took it very seriously. Dreams are a means of communicating with God."

In reflecting upon his dream, Behr wondered, why an arch for St. Mary?

Then he remembered that Mary is often called the Gateway of Heaven, and an arch, he said, is representative of a gateway.

"An arch would be a fitting tribute to Our Lady," Behr noted.

Behr eventually came to realize that the arch would be a triumphal one because of what Mary said in her appearances in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. During those appearances, Mary had foretold the turmoil and wars of the 20th century and predicted the triumph of her Immaculate Heart.

Behr decided he would build a shrine to the Holy Innocents as well.

"I couldn't conceive putting myself into a massive project without a pro-life message," said Behr, who is president of Western New York Lawyers for Life.

Sharing the dream

At first, Behr told only his wife about his dream, and quietly began investigating the feasibility of building an arch and a shrine. He knew of a piece of waterfront property for sale in Buffalo, and began looking at it as a potential site for his project. He also spoke with people who helped build St. Louis's Gateway Arch in the 1960s to see how they did it and how much it cost at the time. Translating the cost of the Gateway Arch into today's currency, Behr estimated that the Arch of Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the International Shrine of the Holy Innocents would cost \$100 million.

Ten days after his dream, Behr said he realized the piece of waterfront property he was considering was the place he had seen in his dream.

In Buffalo, Behr said, state Route 5 turns into an elevated highway, called the Skyway, and crosses over the Buffalo River near Lake Erie. To the left of the Skyway are dilapidated, rundown buildings in downtown Buffalo, where the former Bethlehem Steel factory is located. To the right is a beautiful, green park. Although this is not the only spot being considered, Behr said it is the ideal place to build the arch and shrine.

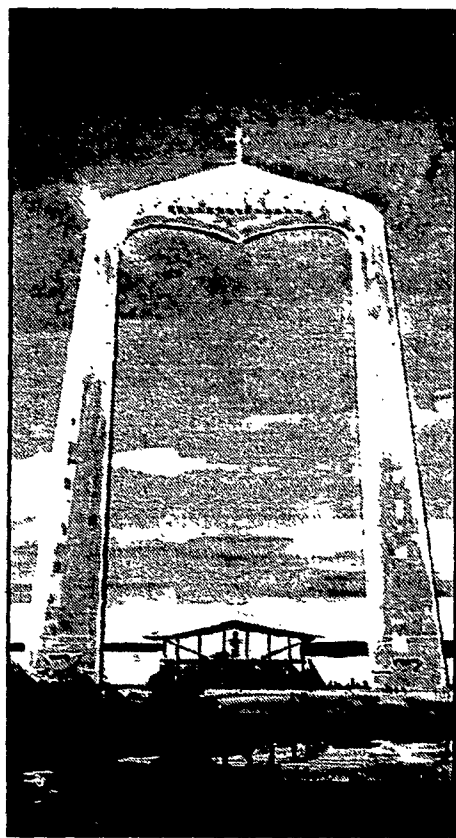
During his initial research, Behr found out that the Gateway Arch attracts 4 million visitors annually, and 1 million people ascend the arch per year.

"I felt with these numbers it could support itself," Behr said of his project. "I found it very exciting. I hoped other people would."

Linda Johnson of Branchport, a parishioner at St. Stephen Parish in Geneva, is one of many people who have found the project exciting indeed.

"We've always had a devotion to Our Lady of Fatima," Johnson said of her family's interest in the arch and shrine.

After reading about the project in



Catholic magazines, Johnson decided to contact Behr for more information. Behr asked Johnson if she and her family would start a chapter of the Arch of Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the International Shrine of the Holy Innocents in Branchport, and they agreed. The chapter now has 50 members.

"This is like a sign for the world," Johnson said of building the arch and shrine. "The Blessed Mother is drawing us to her son. This is a means by which she is doing it."

The project also has drawn national support. In the late fall of 2000, Behr began sharing his idea with others, and the first person he talked to was Benedictine Father Matthew Habiger of Human Life International, who said the arch and shrine would call attention to the evil of abortion and inspire people to join the pro-life movement. Another early supporter was Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life.

"One of the key characteristics of the Gospel of Life is that it must be proclaimed publicly," Father Pavone said in a statement published on the association's Web site. "The protection of life will not be achieved if the activities of the Church and the pro-life movement are directed only toward those who voluntarily seek out the message. We need to stir the attention of the public to these issues whether they want to hear about them or not. A sign as public and visible as the proposed arch and shrine will certainly serve this purpose, as well as many other noble purposes."

In January 2001, Behr created the Association for the Arch of Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the International Shrine of the Holy Innocents, and Fathers Habiger and Pavone, among others, became members of its national advisory board.

The project

The next thing Behr did was create a

prospectus for the project.

He said he chose 700 feet for the height of the arch because seven is supposed to be the number of perfection. According to the prospectus, the arch will feature three chapels: The Chapel of the Sacred Heart in the arch's north leg, the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart in the south leg and the Chapel of the Triumph in the arch's peak. It is hoped that perpetual eucharistic adoration would be maintained in all three chapels.

Plans call for the arch to have a heavenward-pointing, Gothic-style peak topped with a golden cross. The arch will have a hammered gold finish and its lower portion will be engraved or embossed in some manner with the Immaculate Heart, the Sacred Heart and other emblems of Mary. The upper part of the arch will show the 12 stars of the crown of the Woman Clothed With the Sun (Rev 12:1), and the arch's inner contour should resemble the letter "M." The "arch" portion of the monument will resemble a golden crown or tiara, and may be embossed with the crowns of Jesus and Mary at its summit.

The legs are expected to be 100 feet or more in diameter to accommodate not only the chapels, but also various facilities such as confessionals, a museum or gallery, a book/gift shop and a refreshment area. There is also the possibility of housing administrative offices and caretaker and retreat quarters on the upper floors within the arch. Room for permanent displays also will be made available for other Catholic organizations to promote other shrines and pilgrimage destinations worldwide.

The International Shrine to the Holy Innocents will call attention to the evil of abortion, since Behr believes Herod's slaughter of the children of Bethlehem in an attempt to kill the baby Jesus makes the Holy Innocents forerunners of today's victims of abortion.

According to the prospectus, the two-story shrine will be centered directly beneath the apex of the arch. At the base, a stonework and glass enclosure, possibly including a chapel, will contain artwork, statues and devotional candles. The rear wall of the first level will be the foundation of a white marble column finished with a golden capital on which will stand a white marble statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding aloft the Christ Child as the Prince of Peace. The rear wall of the shrine will be adorned by a mural depicting the Slaughter of the Holy Innocents. Above the mural will be a gold wall with a 20-foot-tall mural replica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Directly behind the shrine, in the open and facing Lake Erie, will be another center of devotion, a golden or white marble large statuary grouping of the Holy Family, making the shrine not only pro-life, but pro-family as well.

Behr said he envisions the arch and shrine as a place where people will be brought back to God, and a place where those whose faith is wavering will have their faith strengthened. He expects that the arch and shrine will be instrumental in conversion experiences for visitors, as well as a place of consolation and spiritual heal-

ing for those who have had abortions.

"Our country is amazingly secular these days," he said. "I think people need to be shown a great sign of faith and belief in God."

Garnering support

Although many around the world are excited at the prospect of the arch and shrine being built, others have been speaking out against it.

Behr said critics of the project — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — have written letters to the *Buffalo News*, saying that \$100 million can be put to better use, and should be used to help the poor or to improve education. In response, Behr said that since the goal of the arch and shrine is to bring people closer to God, when they are brought closer, they will be more likely to donate to charities and do good for those who need help.

"Building great shrines builds people's faith and, in the long run, builds charity," Behr said in an interview with EWTV Global Catholic Radio last August.

The next step in the project is to establish more chapters of the Association for the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the International Shrine of the Holy Innocents, Behr said. Currently, chapters have formed throughout the United States as well as in Canada, the Ukraine and Australia.

"We're hoping to start chapters everywhere," he said.

Behr and association chapters are also beginning to plan fundraising campaigns. In Buffalo Sept. 1, there will be a fundraising concert in LaSalle Park. The association also raises money through the Internet, by distributing flyers and through advertisements. However long it takes, Behr is confident the project will come to fruition whenever God sees fit for it to happen.

"We believe it can be done," Behr said. "And it's time for this now."

For more information on the Arch of Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the International Shrine of the Holy Innocents, contact Behr at 866/205-6512 or visit www.archoftriumph.org.

Bishop

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allegations of sexual abuse of a child are made can continue in parochial ministry," the statement read.

The statement added that Bishop Clark recently further revised diocesan policy, removing such priests from diocesan employment altogether, and forbidding them from living in church residences. Six such priests recently were removed by the bishop.

The diocese is also working with area district attorneys to implement a reporting procedure on abuse cases, the statement said.

The diocese said that anyone with concerns or allegations of sexual abuse can contact Barbara Pedeville at 585/328-3228, ext. 215, or Father Robert Ring at 315/536-7459.

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