

# The Miracle

*by* Dan Tricarico

On the way to the drinking fountain, Elysia Martin, a third grader at St. Michael's Parochial School, heard a voice calling her name. When she turned toward the white plaster statue of the Virgin Mary that sat between twin hedges in the rose garden, she saw Mary's hand shift slightly, gesturing her over. Elysia was small and timid with pigtails and glasses. No one usually spoke to her, especially saints or the mothers of Saviors.

When Elysia reached the hedges, the virgin mother smiled and said, "don't be afraid (or perhaps it was "fear not," as it was in the scriptures) and told her that God had great plans for Elysia's life. Mary said, "go to Mass as often as you can, educate yourself, be kind to small animals and the elderly and—whatever else—avoid a boy named Beau that you'll meet in France when you're twenty." Elysia thanked the Virgin Mother, and after nervously genuflecting, returned to her classroom where a geography lesson was in progress.

Elysia calmly related to her classmates the story of the talking statue and what it said about her life. Sister Albertine and each of her third grade students lined up and, in less than five minutes, they congregated around Mary, surrounding her as if awaiting an audience with the Pope, attending the concert of a rock star, or maybe just watching a plasma-screen television.

But each of those assembled believed in what Elysia had told them--for they knew Elysia never lied--so patiently and politely they studied the statue's countenance; and in their own way, each boy and girl--and even Sister Albertine herself--waited for guidance, longed for knowledge, and prayed for compassion, yet every single person ultimately reeled away, bitterly frustrated by the Virgin's stony and stubborn silence.

