

# A Great Mystery Has Been Revealed!

BY MARY BETH NEWKUMET

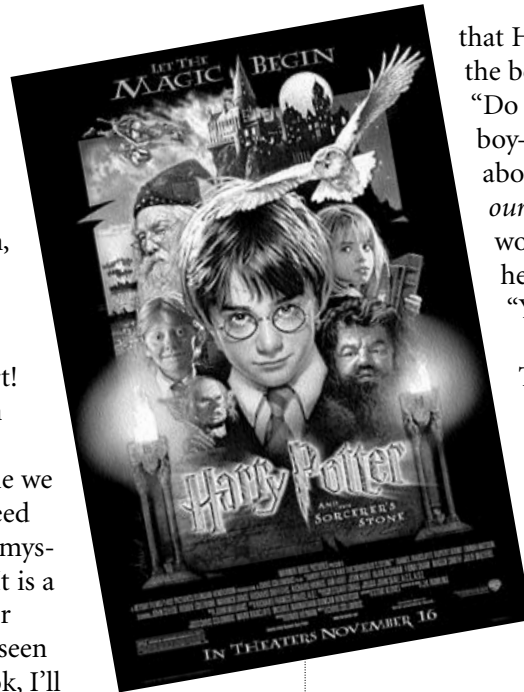
Like other parents, I took my children to see the Harry Potter movie that has enthralled the nation's kids. Since I am neither a film critic, nor a theologian, I am ill-equipped to analyze the movie like many others. But I am qualified to tell you my favorite part!

On the way home from the movie, each one of us took turns telling the scene we liked best. Most of us agreed on the part where a great mystery is revealed to Harry. It is a mystery about himself. For those of you who haven't seen the movie or read the book, I'll give you a quick synopsis: Harry has been living with his aunt, uncle and cousin since infancy. Unloved and friendless, his first ten years of life have been pure misery. In his tiny room under the stairs, Harry dreams of a better life.

## A MYSTERY OF THE HEART

As his 11th birthday draws near, mysterious things suddenly begin to happen to him. Harry communicates with a snake at the zoo. Owls begin arriving at the house with thick envelopes addressed to him! Clearly, something amazing is going on. Someone is trying to approach him. But what? But who?

Finally a giant named Hagrid arrives to reveal the presence of a great mystery. Harry has a destiny that he never knew! There is a whole, other unseen world to which he belongs. When Hagrid finds out



that Harry's aunt and uncle never told the boy, the giant is furious with them: "Do you mean to tell me...that this boy—this boy!—knows nothin' about—about ANYTHING?...About *our* world...*Your* world...*My* world...*Yer* parents' world." Finally, he says incredulously to Harry: "Yeh don' know what yeh *are*?"

You don't know what you are! There is so much more to your life than this. You are not only linked to another world, but also to someone there with enormous power who thinks *you* are amazing. Isn't this a mystery that speaks to the heart of every child? And yes, to adults, too?

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*Be the Mystery!*



Mary, the first Steward of Christ

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## ASTOUNDING TRUTH

With the proliferation of science and technology, our popular culture says that this kind of mystery is only the stuff of fantasy stories. Yet, the Church proclaims—with confidence—this astounding truth: You are so much more than this life you are currently living. There is a tantalizing mystery about you that is just beginning to be revealed. You are deeply beloved by Someone with the power and might of the universe. Not only that, but the relationship between you and this Mysterious One will take your whole life to explore. You will never be downtrodden again; there will always be Someone appreciating and sustaining you in the world both “seen and unseen.” And if that isn’t enough, you are destined for a mind-blowing union of love...oh, and by the way, that love will last forever!

## DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

Many want to, but find they cannot see beyond the horizon of this world. As a result, they go through their days with a kind of desperation for “more” that they can never figure out how to satisfy. Since ancient times, this has always been the great drama of human life. Looking into the beyond, how can one small person possibly approach the Mystery who created the stars?

We can’t. Instead, the Mystery approaches us! “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light,” reflected the world’s Catholic bishops during the Second Vatican Council.

“Christ, the final Adam, by revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (GS#22).

## JESUS IS THE MYSTERY

The mystery of all human life dwells among us. In the person of Jesus Christ, we have a human destiny that has been made divine and a divine destiny that is rooted in everything human! “The Mystery was made known to me by revelation,” proclaimed St. Paul after he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (Ephesians 3:2). In the same way—using the events of everyday life—a Risen Presence, Jesus Christ, is trying to reveal himself to you today, yes, in *your* world, in *your* time, in *your personal circumstances*.

How does Jesus Christ, the Mystery Revealed, make himself present? In the life of his Church. But don’t for a moment doubt that there is no Mystery there. Perhaps there is more—much more—for you to experience! Are you open to the possibilities?

“Would it not be a sign of great ignorance,” mused St. Teresa of Avila, “if a person were asked who he was, and could not say, and had no idea who his father or his mother was, or from what country he came? Though that is great stupidity, our own is incomparably greater if we make no attempt to discover what we are.”

Fictional characters like Harry Potter do not get to have the most amazing lives! The astounding truth is that the destiny of each human person lies in a living relationship with a divine Presence. Faith asks us to take the leap and passionately respond to the approach of this Mystery of

all human life! How do you get started? Look around you with wonder at the people and events in your life. Pray without ceasing. Go to Mass with an open heart. Offer your broken spirit in the confessional. Watch. Wait. Pay attention.

Get ready for an extraordinary adventure! ❖

## Life After Sunday

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# A Unique Encounter with the Mystery

BY JOHN M. CAPOBIANCO

**W**hat is it about going to Mass that moves people? Some say it's really important to have meaningful music. Others say a well-prepared, concise homily is very helpful. For me, it's when I simply recognize the Mass as an opportunity for another unique encounter with the Mystery of God. In this way, the style and eloquence of the celebrant, the selection and quality of hymns, the attraction or distraction of other congregation members, becomes incidental. Just the basic, stripped liturgy—no music, no homily, no frills—can be a beautiful emotional event for me, where I am blown away by the Mystery of the Father's love expressed through the love of Christ's Church.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE MASS

While many parts of the Mass have the ability to jar me at different times, I am often touched when the celebrant, in the midst of the Eucharistic prayer, asks God the Father to remember those who have died and "all who sleep in Christ." Invariably, I

### MYSTERY OF THE WORD

"In the Sacred Scriptures I find nourishment that is solid and pure. But it is above all the Gospel which speaks to me during my prayers. There I find everything that is necessary for my poor little soul. I always find new light in it, meanings that are hidden and mysterious." ❖

—St. Therese of Lisieux

remember someone who deeply touched my life. Recently one Sunday Mass, I was struck by the "memory" of a man who profoundly influenced my life through grade school and passed away when I was in high school. That was nearly thirty years ago. Yet at this Mass, for some reason, the warmth of his friendship, the quiet example of his life, the simple joy of what it was like to be with him flooded my memory. And almost at the same time, I sank, drenched in the sadness of his untimely death at the age of 43, remembering how I longed for his presence the day I married his daughter, how it would have been such a gift if he could have seen and loved his grandchildren.

It was then that the mystery of the Mass and the mystery of life grabbed me. One of his grandchildren, my son John, slid under my folded hands, grabbed my face, and whispered "Dad, you're crying!" He acted as if he needed to tell me something I didn't already know. "Why are you crying?" he asked with amazement. I suppose, like many people, the Mass up to that point didn't strike him as being a particularly moving event. Yet the tender concern he showed me was just like his grandfather whom he had never met. And I too, was amazed. This mysterious sense of grasping the essence of life and love *especially through* the horror of death, through fearful suffering, through years of longing separation is, for me, what the beauty of the Mass is all about.

## THE REFRIGERATOR OF LIFE

Together in public worship, we all bring these kinds of "memories" to the altar of Christ. Every Sunday we gather our life images and attach them to him on the cross. In this way his altar becomes something like a huge family refrigerator of life. There, we gather to remember what is most important. There, in his unique way, he heals our wounds. He binds us together. He feeds us from this altar. He makes us one, not only "with those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith," but also with all those living here and now throughout the world.

"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed," I said looking down at John. "But Dad, I just want to know, what's wrong?" he persisted. "Nothing is wrong," I whispered, "It's time for Communion." This healing union through Christ, this communion, is such a unique encounter with the mystery that, while words often fail to express the fullness of this love, his unique mysterious company with us at Mass never fails to transform me. "There is a Being who is Love and who wishes us to live in communion with him," says Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. "He is there keeping me company, helping me to suffer, urging me to go beyond my suffering to rest in Him. Do as I do: you will see how that transforms everything." ❖



# Making Time for Mystery

**L**ike most modern families, mine has a little too much going on. In addition to work and school, we're participating in youth sports, scouts, parish activities, prayer groups, drivers education, etc., etc., etc.

Don't get me wrong. It's a glorious, full life—but the pace and noise can be overwhelming. As a mother, I have days when I have trouble thinking in full sentences. Those of you who are living like this probably know what I mean. You start to think about something, get distracted by something else, and suddenly have no idea where you are!

When life gets this packed, it is difficult to appreciate the Mystery who dwells in the midst of the daily noise and activity. How can you look around you again with wonder instead of anxiety? In her beautiful book, *A Simple Path*, Mother Teresa of Calcutta did not recommend faith or good works as the first step toward a more glorious life. Mother Teresa recommended *silence*. "The fruit of silence is prayer," she wrote, "the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace."

## A RELENTLESS BUZZ

When I recently looked at a typically jam-packed day, silence seemed both impossible and increasingly essential! While the human voices can be lovely, the radio, television, computer games, cell phones, etc., create a relentless buzz in my house.



Visiting with friends, I can see that our family is not alone in this. Their lives seem to be just as full of activity and noise as ours.

"Many people tell me how difficult it is to find silence in their busy lives," Mother Teresa observed. With four school-age kids still living at home, I have given up any hope of "finding" silence in my crazy days. So, I've scheduled it! Lately, I try to wake up about 45 minutes earlier than everyone else in the house. I go downstairs, get a cup of coffee and sit. No radio, no television, no newspaper. Silence.

I have found that Mother Teresa is right. The fruit of silence is indeed prayer—a real conversation with a mysterious Presence who is making himself known to me. Where does Mother Teresa's "simple path" eventually lead? To the Risen Jesus. "Jesus is my only love," Mother Teresa said, "Jesus is my all in all. Jesus is my everything. Because of this, I am never afraid."

The Lord of Heaven and

Earth—the only One who can give us the happiness and peace we so ardently desire—is trying to make himself known to each human person living today. But first, we must set aside some time to ponder his Mystery. Ready to take the first step? Schedule some silence. —MBN ❖

## GETTING THERE

**W**hat should you "do" during your silence? Like St. Martha, believers often are "anxious and worried about many things" during personal prayer. Yet the Lord does not require elaborate rituals or petitions. He is only looking for your love, for the cry of the heart that calls out for his companionship. Follow the lead of Martha's sister, Mary, and use your silence to sit with the Lord and listen to what he has to say to you personally. Revel in his promise that this desire "will not be taken" from you (Lk 10: 38-42)! ❖

# A Year of Mystery

BY PETER SONSKI

I had heard repeatedly that the Jubilee Year would be a period of immense grace, and had no reason to doubt it. Still, since I had never experienced anything spiritually momentous (apparitions, ecstasies, etc.), I had no special expectations either.

In January 2000, my wife was diagnosed with cancer. Terry had been contending with flu-like symptoms for several months, but her persistently swollen lymph nodes had caused us to seek consultation. Each test result and consultation supported that finding however, and Terry began chemotherapy February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Jubilee Day for the Sick. Both devotees of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we were consoled by this providential timing.

We had moved to a new state only eight months earlier and had no close friends or relatives nearby—or so we thought. Upon approaching our parish school principal, our home-schooled children were in class within a week, outfitted with hand-me-down uniforms the school supplied. My new employer allowed me to alter my schedule so I

could be with Terry during her treatments. Parishioners began arriving at our door nightly with meals and groceries. Our children never lacked a ride to school or sports, and were never without someone to watch them when I was away.

## SHOULDERING THE CROSS

Our family prayer ritual, a nightly rosary, intensified. Though we were longing for a cure, we prayed equally in thanksgiving for all the kindness being showered upon us. We were experiencing a cross but the Lord was shouldering it with us, in a mysterious way, through the affection and generosity of others.

Chemotherapy and radiation treatments lasted until October, causing a physical toll on Terry that seemed worse than the cancer's effects themselves. Her body had been exposed to so much poison that we were advised she would be unable to bear further children. A December visit to the gynecologist confirmed a suspicion, however. Not only was Terry pregnant, but she had conceived within days of her last treatment.

Physically and psychologically,

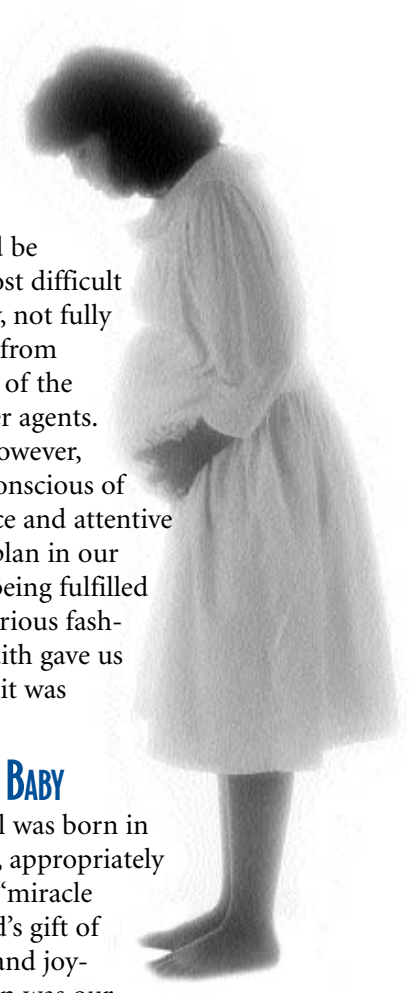
this would be Terry's most difficult pregnancy, not fully recovered from the effects of the anti-cancer agents. By now, however, we were conscious of God's grace and attentive to it. His plan in our lives was being fulfilled in a mysterious fashion, but faith gave us assurance it was His will.

## A MIRACLE BABY

Michael was born in June 2001, appropriately dubbed a "miracle baby." God's gift of a healthy and joyful new son was our confirmation of Terry's return to health, which subsequent visits to the oncologist would verify.

Grace comes in packages both sweet and sour, yet each is a source of blessing. Though we had no particular expectancy for the Jubilee Year, we received an abundance of grace. Hardship is as much a godsend as good fortune. Living difficulties with trust in His provident care allows us to enter more deeply into the divine plan, and to discern more clearly the love God constantly offers. ❖

—Peter Sonski is director of communications at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.



## THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

No human person has lived a life more shrouded in mystery than Mary of Nazareth. Yet, it was a mystery she fully embraced. "She simply said: how can this be?" says Pope John Paul II. "The question expressed the humility of faith, the willingness to put one's life at the service of the divine mystery, without being able to understand how it would come about." Today through the Mysteries of the rosary, we can ponder this same truth in our own lives. But we don't have to worry about making those connections ourselves. The Blessed Mother is longing to draw us closer to her Son. During her mysterious appearances at Lourdes, France, and Fatima, Portugal, the rosary is the gift she offered for our contemplation. Will you accept her companionship into the deep? ❖

# Living the Mystery

BY PAULA SPARACINO

**W**ithin any group, there is often a distinction between those who are attentive and eager to participate and those who are more withdrawn. Something mysterious seems to pull some people in, while others hold back. I have witnessed this most often in my experiences with my parish youth group.

## REFLECTING ON THE MYSTERY

This past semester at the University of Maryland, I enrolled in a Service-Learning Practicum course. The requirement of this course was to complete 30 hours of volunteer service and to undergo extensive reflection on our service site and our personal experiences there. I decided to use my annual fall parish youth retreat as my project. Every week, we wrote a reflective essay on our service project and presented the material to our classmates. In the end, I realized that the reflections enabled me to get a great deal more out of this retreat than any previous retreats in which I have participated. Instead of letting the retreat pass me by, I was forced to put time and effort into every aspect of my involvement. I presented all of this to my University classmates, many of whom were unfamiliar with the extent of my involvement in and excitement about my parish. Some of my friends were curious. They noticed my enjoyment in doing my project, while everyone else complained about theirs. They even asked me questions about what kind of activities our youth

group did, and how I came to be actively involved. They too were attracted to the mystery of parish life that they saw in me.

While on retreat, there was a noticeable difference between those kids who came to retreat looking for answers, and those who came with closed minds. It's interesting to compare the first evening of the retreat to the last afternoon. There is a distinctly stronger camaraderie within the group at the end of the retreat. Even the kids who might have come with a closed mind leave with either an awakened sense of wonder about the deepest longing of their hearts, or at least with a mind newly opened to the mystery of Christ in the world. I find this to be the most incredible aspect of the retreat.

## THE MYSTERY AT WORK

Throughout my years of involvement with the youth group, I had never really opened up at a retreat myself. However, this year as a leader I accepted the challenge to give a witness talk. I know this is the reason this year's retreat had such an incredible impact on me. It provided me with an opportunity to bring my personal experiences to the high school kids on retreat. I spoke of a friend of mine who had had a rough year. He cursed the world and was tormented by his hardships. He felt lost and alone, and searched for consolation in alcohol and drugs. And surprisingly for him, found none.



I wanted to make the point that my friend's anxiety is a sign that something is missing from his life. Upon realizing this, it was time for my friend to begin his search for happiness – a search that many of the kids on retreat could possibly already be undergoing; a search that might have brought them on retreat.

As I gave my talk, I noticed the intense concentration and eager anticipation of some kid's faces: wondering how my story worked out, possibly looking for answers to their own similar problems. For some it may have offered hope. By the end of the retreat, several kids had approached me to talk. These conversations proved that the kids gained confidence to speak to me on a personal level, something that is very meaningful to me.

At the end of the retreat, the kids filled out evaluations, which I reviewed and organized for my class. The response was incredible. Almost all of the 40 evaluations praised this year's retreat as the best one so far. They noted that the talks helped the kids to open up because they were so meaningful and came from the speakers' hearts. One question on the evaluation asked to name one thing that each person took away from the retreat. Two responses in particular stood out to me: "this retreat has helped me

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# Be the Mystery!

In an issue of the *New York Times Magazine* devoted to “Beginnings” in October 2001, it was sad to see how often the big questions of life were skirted by some reporters following the events of September 11th. “If New York is going to rebuild again—and rebuild as New York—it is going to have to put frivolity on the agenda, without apologies,” urged one style reporter. “While the nation finds strength in the flag, New York is going to have to raise again the local colors: vanity, libido, ambition, attitude.”

Yes, there were a few more serious proposals for “getting on with life” in the magazine, but this one was also reflected in much of the advertising and editorial content of the newspaper that same day. Once again, those who drive the

popular culture were attempting to speed away from life’s most compelling mysteries.

## INTO THE DEEP

The Holy Father urges us in the opposite direction. “Put out into the deep!” he proclaimed in his pastoral letter, *At the Beginning of the Third Millennium*, echoing the Lord’s timeless command to his disciples (*Lk 5:4*). With this urging, Christ’s Church asks us to resist the temptation to stay on the surface and live frivolously as if the deep, seated fears and anxieties caused by the horrific events of human life do not matter. Instead, the Church asks us to go into the depth of relationship with the Lord—deep into the height and breadth of his love—so he can redeem life’s

tragedies and allow our fears and anxieties to find a place of rest. Only in companionship with him can every aspect of our humanity be fully, passionately, lived.

For Christians, the decision to follow the Lord’s provocation “into the deep” will naturally change the way we present the Mystery to the people who surround us. Will we simply match their fundamentalism with a fundamentalism of our own? Will we present Christ just as a historic person—an example of someone with the most impressive values? Or, will we begin to *be* his Presence living now in the life of his Church?

Each member of Christ’s Church is called to “be the Mystery.” Does this invitation intrigue you? Then, put out into the depth of the great human mysteries of birth, suffering, tragedy, death, redemption and ecstasy. Allow the Lord to show you what lies beyond the frivolous cultural proposals for “vanity, libido, ambition and attitude” that will never be satisfying enough. When you respond to his life in this way, you will be someone who loves so radically that you become a great Mystery to the people who surround you. What an amazing way to live! If you haven’t started this life, please do. The world is waiting for you. ❖



## A TEENAGE MYSTERY

Everyday when I get up to go to school, I make sure I get my newspaper “reading” in. Well I guess you could call it reading, but all it really consists of is the comics and Ann Landers. I grab the style section and browse the articles sometimes finding some juicy gossip about the stars and their so-called perfect lives. I then go to my favorite comic “Baby Blues” first, and read any other comics that look funny. Then I get to Ann Landers. I read about the woman whose 13-year-old daughter has been on drugs for the past two years and how she can’t get her to stop. I read about a man who is married but has found he is in love with another woman. Each day there’s a new story and each day I get more and more confused. I live in a very loving environment. I also belong to a parish where I have seen many people who are able to follow God’s path and live their lives as loving Catholics. Then I look back at all of the relationships and people from TV, magazines, and of course, Ann Landers. How could they not have found the path like the others did? How do they need so much help that they feel the need to write to Ann? And how come they are so miserable? It’s all a big mystery to me.

—Libby Newkumet, age 14 ❖

# Mystery

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## FROM THE MYSTICAL MONSIGNOR

### A Mystery that can be Known

**T**he very first thing when we think about “mystery” is it usually means the unknown, the incomprehensible. “I don’t understand this; I don’t know it; it is a mystery to me.” It is important to realize that in the Christian faith, this is not the meaning of the term “mystery.”

For St. Paul, the Mystery is something that is now revealed. But it’s not revealed in the sense of, “Well, that’s it. Everything is known, so let’s move on to the next thing.” No, the Mystery always bursts through your limitations and makes you embrace more and more of it. It is revealed in a way that is graspable, but it is graspable as something that always exceeds. Even more mysteriously, it contains the power to move you beyond your own natural capacities to move! You continue sinking into it, penetrating into it; you feel like you’re being emptied out. Then when you look at it again, it keeps doing that and it does it in a way that leads to ecstasy, to total ecstasy.

What is the Mystery? It is the secret of God: that he is love, that he is gift, that he is the grace that has been revealed. But there is a plan involved to it. The Mystery is called by St. Paul to be the re-gathering of all things under Christ, because all things were created for that from the beginning. In a personal and ecclesial sense, the Mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory. This active presence of Christ, this ongoing relation between Christ and the cosmos, is the mystery that now has been revealed. And the Christian, by the power of the Spirit, has the capacity and the dignity of looking at any person or circumstance and discovering Christ acting there. ❖

—Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete

*U.S. Ecclesiastical Advisor for Communion and Liberation,  
an international movement in the Church*

## Ponder In Your Heart

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does the word “Mystery” mean to you? (p. 1 and 2)

- Does the phrase expressed to Harry Potter, “you don’t know who you are?” ring true in your own life today?
- How does Jesus, the Mystery Revealed, help you know who you are?

Do you experience the Mass as a mystery? (p. 3)

- What part of the Mass most often inspires you to ponder the impact of Christ in your life?
- How does the Mass connect us with both the living and the dead?

Do you take time to ponder the mystery of life? (p. 4)

- Read and reflect on Luke 10: 38-42.
- Do you pray like St. Martha or more like her sister, Mary?

What events in your life have seemed the most mysterious? (p. 5)

- Did you experience the Lord’s Presence during those events? How?
- Do the events in the lives of Jesus and Mary help you recognize the mystery of God’s plan in your own circumstances?

How does your parish live with the Mystery of Jesus? (p. 6)

- Discuss parish events or opportunities where people were moved by a Mysterious Presence who lives among us.
- What steps is your parish taking to introduce the Mystery of Christ to young people?

Why is it so difficult for the secular culture to see the Mystery at work in the world? (p. 7)

- Where did you recognize the mysteries of human life in the events of September 11, 2001?
- How do you present the Mystery of Christ to the people who surround you at work or in your neighborhood?

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become closer to those in my Youth Group; I learned to appreciate all of these people more, whether they are my close friends or not,” and another stated that the retreat “helped me to grow closer to Jesus Christ and friends.” The entire mystery of parish and community life is captured in these reflections. Many of the retreatants seemed to mysteriously sense that this is why the youth retreats in our parish are so incredible. ❖