



Dominican Sisters of Mary
Mother of the Eucharist

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MATER Eucharistiae

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MARIAN TRANSFORMATION

PAGE 5

Crowning Mary in
the Classroom

PAGE 12

Meditation:
Lovely Lady,
Dressed in Blue

PAGE 14

Consecration
to Mary and the
Assumption

PAGE 18

Through Mary
to Jesus



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ON THE COVER

Madonna of San Sisto, used with permission from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas - Angelicum.

DEAR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS,

May is a month particularly dedicated to Our Lady! As Dominican Sisters dedicated under the title Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, we have a special call to proclaim a Marian witness of transformation. By imitating Mary's fiat in the details of our vowed life, we show how the little and great things we do and say each day can have a particular Marian theme. Thus we participate in a "Marian transformation" day in and day out, a transformation that not only shapes our lives individually, but the lives and world around us! This is true for us as Dominican Sisters of Mary, but it is also true for anyone who takes seriously a life lived "to Jesus through Mary" – any and all of us can participate in Marian transformation!

I am pleased to present to you, on behalf of the community, this newsletter themed "Marian Transformation". The Sisters have provided lovely and rich reflections on what it means to be dedicated to Our Lady, and how we in a particular way live out our Marian consecration in community. In addition to these reflections, you will also find in these pages encouragement for increased devotion to Our Lady throughout her special month of May.

During this beautiful month when the world is adorned with spring flowers and the freshness of new life, we pray that you will find inspiration and encouragement in this issue of *Mater Eucharistiae*, to allow your life and the lives of your loved ones to experience deep Marian transformation. Ultimately, this transformation will lead you directly to her Son, and to union with the Father, by the power of her beloved Holy Spirit.

Faithfully in Christ,



Mother Amata Veritas Ellenbecker, OP
Prioress General

MEETING OUR LADY'S GAZE

Mary is our mother. We know it theologically, we pray it in our piety and spirituality. We see images of Mary in sacred art. We have a rich heritage of beautiful Marian devotion and prayers. We are reminded regularly of Mary's motherhood throughout the liturgical year, when we celebrate the Marian feast days and solemnities. In the month of May, traditionally dedicated as Our Lady's month, we honor Mary with processions, crowning her statues with beautiful spring flowers. But do we know that Mary is our mother in our hearts?

The cover of this issue features the striking gaze of Our Lady in the hauntingly beautiful image of the Madonna of San Sisto, an image beloved of Dominicans since the foundation of the Order of Preachers. The choice of this image for the cover is two-fold: first, to share the beauty of our Dominican heritage with our readers, and second, and more importantly, to bring us all to a loving encounter with Our Lady, through her penetrating gaze of love. By gazing at Our Lady through prayer and study, we come to know her look as our loving mother. She is truly our mother, and it is by meeting her gaze that we are transformed.

In this issue of our *Mater Eucharistiae*, we desire that all of our readers come to experience the loving gaze of Mary, and through her gaze, receive the grace to know of the deep love of Mary for each and everyone. It is through her gaze that we experience "Marian Transformation" into authentic disciples of her Son, Jesus Christ. †



The story of the icon on the cover of this newsletter, and pictured to the left, is quite fascinating. The image has many names, such as the "Madonna of San Sisto", the "Madonna of Saint Luke", or the "Advocata". It is considered one of the oldest paintings of Our Lady, and has been in the possession of the Dominican Nuns at the Monastery of Monte Mario in Rome since the 13th century. The image is believed to be miraculous and has been the special possession of Dominicans since the time of Saint Dominic and the establishment of his nuns in the Eternal City.

The Madonna of San Sisto. Image in the public domain.

OH, FOR A REMEMBERING HEART!

By Sister Mary Esther, OP

“And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” Luke 1:26

Memory can be hit or miss. In the classroom, I am constantly adding items to my most recent sticky note list: update that grade, send that email. Oh, for a mind that remembers things! Some things are more important to remember than others, though – the faithful love of God, the way He sees us and treasures us, the extent to which He goes to bring us back into His embrace. Oh, for a heart that remembers these things!

Mary’s heart is a remembering heart. It is a pondering heart. I imagine Our Lady tenderly cupping in her hands each memory of God’s goodness, each moment with her Son, and gazing upon each one with big-eyed wonder. Mary exults, “The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.... He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Lk 1:49, 54-55). Her praise extends not only to God’s immediate action in her own life, but also to the fidelity of God throughout all of salvation history.

Mary’s song echoes and fulfills a song sung by many men and women in the Old Testament, whose own remembering hearts foreshadow that of Our Lady.

One of these remembering hearts belonged to Esther, a Jewish orphan girl who became queen of Persia. When the lives of her people were in danger, she accepted a request to intercede for them at the risk of her own life. She fasted and prayed for three days in preparation for this act of bravery. Esther called upon God for strength, citing the reason for her confidence: “From birth, I have heard among my people that you, Lord, chose Israel from among all nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, as a lasting inheritance, and that you fulfilled all your promises to them.” (Esther C:16). Queen Esther’s prayer flowed from a heart that had pondered God’s faithful love to Israel in the past. She recalled that God’s track record is spotless, no

promise going unfulfilled. The remembrance of this moved Esther to entrust herself to this same good God – faithful then and faithful now – and to make a courageous fiat to the part she was to play in God’s next great act of fatherly care.

The Old Testament is filled with similar prayers from others: Moses, Hannah, David, Daniel, Judith, Ezra, Nehemiah. Each one cries out from a heart that trusts God’s present and future fidelity because it remembers that He has always been faithful.

But what of us? How can I allow God to cultivate in me a heart that remembers? What stories of God’s faithful love have convinced me of His continued providence in my life? My own story? My family’s story? The story of salvation history found in the Bible? The stories of the saints throughout the history of the Church? With Mary and all the holy men and women, let us ponder and trust. †



CROWNING OUR LADY THE QUEEN OF THE CLASSROOM!

By Sister Maria Kolbe, OP

The month of May is an especially beautiful time to instill devotion to Our Blessed Mother in our students’ hearts. One way I choose to do this with my second graders is by having a small “May Crowning” in my classroom. There is no set format for this, but I would like to share the preparation and ceremony I have developed over the years and use with my students.

I choose a date in May when we, as a class, will crown the statue of Our Lady and consecrate our hearts to her. Well before this date, I create a simple altar to Our Lady in the classroom, which will eventually become the place where we crown Our Lady. It can be a small table covered with a white cloth or special fabric. A tall statue of Our Blessed Mother sits in the center of the table, and I place two vases of flowers on either side of the statue.



After setting up the space and location, I invite my class to gather around this shrine to Our Lady daily for 15 to 30 minutes. I want them to learn that the space is a place of reverence and a space to grow in their devotion to Our Lady. I also encourage the students to kneel, stand, and sit during these gatherings to show them that we use both body and soul to pray.

I teach my students two or three traditional Marian hymns several weeks in advance, to sing in our procession to crown the statue at our Marian shrine. I also practice the

procession and crowning ceremony once or twice the week before the date, in order for the children to enter in more fully during the actual celebration and not be distracted with logistics.

On the day of our May Crowning, I invite the students to wear their “Sunday Best” for the ceremony and to bring a few flowers to present to Our Lady in the procession.

The procession begins in the hallway with the students gathered in two parallel lines: one line with the boys, the other with the girls. The students process into the classroom towards the Marian shrine while singing Marian hymns. Two-by-two, the students approach the altar, make a simple bow towards Our Lady’s statue, and then place their flowers in the empty vases beside the statue. They then find a place on the sides of the altar and kneel while the procession continues up the middle aisle. Once all students have processed through and are kneeling, the last two students crown Our Lady. They then join the other students while we finish our hymns.

After our May Crowning ceremony is complete, we sit and share our favorite things about Mary or a special intention we entrusted to her. We then kneel and pray a decade of the rosary and say a simple prayer of consecration to the Blessed Mother together. Finally, we end by standing and singing one final hymn to Our Lady. I can’t help but be filled with joy at the sight of so many little hearts open to the love of their heavenly Mother! †

CHECK OUT THIS LOVELY RESOURCE FOR PRAYING THE ROSARY WITH YOUR STUDENTS TO HONOR OUR LADY! SCAN THE QR CODE FOR INFORMATION OR TO ORDER:



UPLIFTED: WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Introducing a new collaboration between Openlight Media, the digital apostolate of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, and the Western Province of Dominican Friars!



Pictured above: the cover of the Uplifted guidebook for students, teachers, or individual use for personal study.

Sr. John Dominic, OP, the Director of Openlight Media, answered the following questions about this exciting new initiative:

Fr. Brad Elliott, O.P. and Sr. Maria Catherine Toon, O.P., host the 'Uplifted' series together. Why did you partner with the friars for this project?

It seemed natural for us to collaborate with the Dominican Friars as we preach and teach and bring our own charism into this “new public square”—the Internet. We are formed and educated in philosophy and theology from the rich tradition within the Order of Preachers—many of whom are saints. We have an essential contribution to make in the field of education, catechesis and evangelization and we don’t have time to be siloed in our approach. St. Dominic set the tone with his early support of the formation of women religious. We see this as our way to gather forward the spirit of our founder. We hope *Uplifted* is just the beginning of more productions.

What is your hope for those who experience the 'Uplifted' series?

It is our hope that *Uplifted* will be a trusted resource for those seeking to navigate many conflicting messages. *Uplifted: What Makes You Happy?* is an engaging series that poses the big question of life and offers appealing true answers.

ABOUT THE NEW CURRICULUM

Disciple of Christ, Education in Virtue has developed Restored in Christ resources for high school and older.

Uplifted: What Makes You Happy? is a video series and accompanying book for ages 13 and older. It is intended to be a general introduction to living the Christian life and answering our ultimate purpose in life—union with God.

This series is a collaboration with the Dominican Friars of the Most Holy Name of Jesus (Oakland, California) and the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist (Ann Arbor, Michigan). The professionally developed videos were produced by Openlight Media in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It is our hope to continue publishing and producing content which brings the Dominican charism to Catholic education and beyond.

The ***Uplifted*** series includes:

- Video series hosted on Openlight Media Plus, featuring Sr. Maria Catherine, OP and Fr. Brad Elliott, OP teaching lessons on the Christian life and virtue.
- Full-color guidebook for students that accompanies the video series.
- *Virtue Strength Survey* that enables young people to know their virtue strengths and the virtues to be cultivated. The survey is supported by videos on the virtues (Fall 2023).
- *Virtue Field Guide* offering practical tips for living the Christian way of life (Fall 2023).

“In this series, Sr. Maria Catherine Toon, O.P., and Fr. Brad Elliott, O.P. act as cheerful and wise guides introducing readers and viewers into a new way of living and finding meaning. The path they offer is nothing other than the Catholic moral life as articulated in the Bible, the Fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. When I read through the book and watched the series, I could not help becoming inspired once again to thank God for showing us the way to find the happiness that we so desperately seek.”

from the Introduction by Michael A. Dauphinais, Ph.D. Ave Maria University, Ave Maria, Florida





Encounter Christ in Scripture in Your Discernment

Join us for a discernment retreat!

November 4-5

February 10-11, 2024

April 13-14, 2024

**The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.**

Luke 1:46-55

Mary tells us in her Magnificat that the rich will be “sent away empty” (1:53). When we do not seek, the Lord cannot give. It is only the hungry who will be “filled with good things” by our generous God. Ask Jesus and Mary to show you all the ways you are living as though you were “rich.” What do you need to let go? How can you increase your hunger for the Lord?



God keeps His promises. (1:54-55). Speak to Jesus from the heart and ask Him to show the might of His arm in your life. Ask Him how He desires to reveal His plan for you in this time of discernment.



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Help us radiate Christ's light into a darkened world



“...we have lived with two or three generations that were not given the truth. And it has affected how adults live their lives. They don't see the Mass as important; perhaps they consider themselves recovering Catholics. But what the Sisters are doing today, I hope, stops that loss and will then create a new generation who can address the complexity of life today, but doing so with that great, simple truth of belief in Jesus Christ.”

- Most Reverend Thomas Daly, Bishop of Spokane,
Chairman of USCCB Committee on Catholic Education

GIVE TODAY

IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions (for those 70 ½ or older) may bring significant tax benefits.

Donor Advised Fund gifts support the Sisters with funds already set aside for charity.

Stock donations may provide tax advantages whether your stocks have experienced gains or losses.

HELP US PLAN FOR TOMORROW

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🌐 www.sistersofmary.org/plannedgiving



With joy, we preach and teach truth in the Dominican tradition, encouraging religious vocations and nurturing a life-long love of Christ and His Church.



- ✦ Reaching 15,000+ students from pre-k through college in classrooms around the nation.
- ✦ Offering educators, families, and individuals compelling catechetical resources, both in print and online. (openlightmedia.com).
- ✦ Hosting discernment retreats that draw hundreds of women annually from across the country and beyond.

Together we can change the culture by forming hearts and minds for generations to come!

HEARTS on FIRE THE VOCATION STORY OF SISTER CORA ROSE, OP

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) Growing up in a small town in Oregon, I committed myself to two things: athletics and my Catholic faith. My family supported me in both areas, but playing volleyball, basketball, and running track and field in high school vied for my time and attention. I found myself attaching my value and self-worth more to them than to deepening my relationship with Jesus. After graduation, I attended Oregon State University but no longer had the competitions and sports to distract myself. All the things I had comfortably connected myself to were gone, and a feeling of emptiness lingered. I decided to strengthen that other vine I was still hanging onto by a thread and became involved in the Newman Center's Catholic Campus ministry. There I came to know Jesus, the true vine, and I was dedicated to making Him a priority in my life. Slowly detaching myself from worldly things and fixing my heart to His, I experienced an increase in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, especially joy and peace. My schedule took on more and more spiritual practices such as attending daily Mass, meditation with Scripture, Eucharistic Adoration every week, and volunteering at the parish – anything to spend more time with Jesus and fall in love with Him and His Church. At a certain point there wasn't anything else I really desired except Him, and it was then that I heard the invitation to remain in Him as a consecrated religious sister. I joined our community, professed my final vows in 2022, and will remain in His love for all my life. +



MARIAN TRANSFORMATION

Two Sisters share their stories of how Our Lady's motherhood through the gift of the Rosary has transformed their own hearts and lives.

The Rosary is My Life

By Sister Maria Rosario, OP

It wasn't until I was in my late twenties that I began to pray the rosary. As a cradle Catholic, I knew how to pray the rosary, I just hadn't felt the need to do so. But that changed when I received an invitation from a friend to join a group of women from my parish to pray the rosary on a Monday evening. That simple invitation to pray with the Rosary Cenacle turned into a habit of praying with them every week. That week later turned into months, and then the months turned into years. Five years later, I entered the convent and since that time, I've lost track of how many rosaries I've prayed.

Initially, when I began to pray the rosary, it was as if I entered a peaceful oasis where the outside world was no longer present. This seemingly new dimension outside of time and space gave me a freedom to allow the Blessed Virgin Mary to teach me how to pray this most special prayer.

Mary was helping me to be still and open to whatever God desired to share with me during my time of meditation. With each *Ave*, I could feel her guiding me to ponder with the eyes of my soul a particular aspect of the mystery I was considering.



Each rosary I pray is never the same, new glimmers of grace shine forth as I consider the riches they hold:

Together with Mary, I am present with her and Joseph and Jesus. I am at the manger seeing Baby Jesus' glistening eyes and smiling face turned towards me.

Seated with the chosen Twelve, I am present at the Last Supper as Jesus begins a new covenant.

I stand with Mary and John at the foot of the Cross beholding Jesus' bruised and bleeding body as He surrenders His spirit to the Father.

I am in the garden hearing Jesus say "Mary," and at once Mary Magdalene's distraught weeping turns to joy, for the Lord is risen!

These mysteries are really one great mystery, the mystery of our faith, God's call for us to be united with Him on earth and in heaven.

While on earth, you and I are in a spiritual battle against our fallen human nature, against concupiscence. But God provides for our weaknesses and failings, especially when we pray the rosary. Our Blessed Mother intercedes for us as we pray for our needs and those of the whole world, seeking to grow in holiness. By meditating on these mysteries of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection, we are challenged to reflect those very virtues we have pondered. And like a good mother, Mother Mary gently turns our attention to those place in our lives that need the light of grace to be transformed to become more like her Son, Jesus.

So I ask you, have you prayed your rosary today? Maybe it's time to invite Mary to help you discover the treasures of the rosary. †

The Thread of the Rosary

By Sister Maria Catherine, OP

In George MacDonald's fairy tale, *The Princess and the Goblin*, the eight-year-old Princess Irene discovers that her Great-Great Grandmother has been living in the attic. MacDonald describes the elder Queen Irene as being a beautiful, ageless, fairy-godmother-like woman, who leads the Princess out of danger by means of an invisible thread. When trapped in an underground mine and tempted to go down a different path, the Princess explains to her companion, "This is the way my thread goes, and I must follow it." Little Princess Irene's obedience to the thread means life or death for many.

For my 18th birthday, my Aunt and Godmother, Cathy, gave me a beautiful red rosary in memory of my mother, who died when I was young. Even though I didn't know anything about it, I treasured this gift, knowing my mother had loved the rosary. My Aunt Christine, who frequently talked with my mother about her devotion, recalls her saying emphatically "I go to Our Lady for everything."

Years later when I learned to pray the rosary, it became my "invisible thread" that ties me to the Blessed Mother and my own deceased mother. Initially, approaching Our Lady both repelled and fascinated me. Like the Queen Irene, Our Lady is both mysterious and familiar, so far above me and yet so human. But she possesses the power and mystery of being the Mother of God, which drew my heart to hers more and more.

As I learned more about devotions like the rosary and Our Lady's motherhood of all mankind, I began to trust that there was a place for me in her heart, too.

After college as I was discerning my own vocation, the people in my life who had a devotion to Mary started to stand out. How quickly they turned to her for help in every difficulty! They weathered the ebb and flow of suffering more easily, and were docile to God's will despite great trials. All of these qualities indicated that following the Marian "thread" means a way out of darkness and confusion. All the people I admire most have this mark of obedience to her.

The more I prayed the rosary, the more I started to see her mark in my own life. When a difficulty arises, I know she is with me, and guides me through each challenge with her invisible thread. Through this daily devotion, I discovered the comfort of being known by someone who knows my own heart inside and out. All I need do is follow the thread of the rosary, and stick to this path. This way of living and praying has transformed my own fears and confusion into opportunities for grace.

Imagine that someone as grand and majestic as the Mother of God desires and intercedes for each particular grace that you need. You have no better advocate than her. If we all follow her, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17). †



MEDITATION LOVELY LADY, DRESSED IN BLUE

By Mother Assumpta, OP

Some of my most beautiful memories of elementary and high school revolve around the Blessed Virgin Mary. In May we tried our best to honor her with what we called “May Crowning.” We brought flowers, sang songs, and honored her with a beautiful crown of flowers. We also do that today in our convents, and hopefully it is done in many other places. We crown Mary because she is not only the Mother of God but also our mother. Jesus assured us of this by giving her to us as our mother when dying on the Cross. What more beautiful gift could He have given us? Why did He do this? He knows that every one of us needs a mother.

It is interesting that on the Cross, Jesus said to John, “Behold your Mother,” but to Mary He said, “Woman, behold your son!” He used the word Woman, not Mother, not Mary, but Woman. In doing this He was speaking to all women. Jesus also called her “Woman” at Cana. This surely showed His Mother’s concern for others. If Jesus gave us His Mother when dying on the Cross, she surely is the model for all mothers. As Mary loved her Son, a mother is called upon to love everyone and in a special way those of her own family. Love is not exclusive.

We all know St. John Paul’s intense love for Our Lady. He had the Latin motto “Totus Tuus” engraved into his coat of arms. This means, “I am all yours, and all I have is yours.” In his 1995 letter to women he said that women are God’s masterpiece and



The Assumption of the Virgin by Luca Giordano. Image in the public domain.

creation’s crowning glory. Archbishop Fulton Sheen also had a tremendous love for Mary. He called her the world’s first love. He urged his priests to adopt a devotion to Mary and to call upon her intercession. Then one day when they reached eternity, they would hear Christ say, “I’ve heard my Mother speak of you.”

May is the perfect month to honor our own mothers. Signs of new life are all around us. Sun shining, grass growing, and flowers blooming turn our thoughts to our own mother who gave us life. She cared for us, wiped away our tears, corrected us when necessary and much more. Just a kiss from a mother on an injured finger would soothe it! A mother will always be mother to her children.

Mary went through her Joyful and Sorrowful Mysteries, as do all mothers. I know nothing about what will happen

in Heaven since it is God’s best kept secret, but I would like to think that our Heavenly Mother and all mothers will celebrate together their Glorious Mysteries!

Although written by Mary Dixon Thayer, this poem was popularized in the 1950s by Archbishop Sheen. Here is a selection:

Lovely Lady dressed in blue –
Teach me how to pray!
God was just your little boy,
Tell me what to say!

Do you really think He cares
If I tell Him things—
Little things that happen? And
Do the Angels’ wings

Make a noise? And can He hear
Me if I speak low?
Does He understand me now?
Tell me – for you know. †

WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD: A NEW MISSION FOR THE SISTERS IN GALLUP, NEW MEXICO

We are pleased to announce that we will begin serving in the Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Gallup. With gratitude to Bishop James Wall, and his generous invitation to partner in the mission of Catholic Schools, we are so honored to respond and begin serving in the 2023-2024 academic year. We are immensely grateful to Dr. John Freeh and the Pastor and Rector of the Cathedral parish, Fr. Mitchell Brown, for the ways they are preparing for our arrival this fall. Please join us in praying for the Diocese of Gallup and this exciting expansion of partnership for the salvation of souls!



In the spring of 2023, Mother Amata Veritas and Sr. Thomas Aquinas visited Gallup and Sacred Heart Catholic School. It was a particularly meaningful visit, as it coincided with the feast day of Saint Katherine Drexel - missionary and foundress!



Founded in 1939, the Diocese of Gallup covers a wide expanse straddling the states of New Mexico and Arizona. The Diocese serves primarily Native American and Hispanic populations, and currently has eleven Catholic schools.

STUDY

CONSECRATION AND THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

By Sister Maximilian Marie, OP

Mary is the Mother of my Savior and is different from the other saints. As Mother of God, she was redeemed in a more eminent manner and filled with the gift of grace more than all other creatures and, likened to her risen Son, was raised body and soul to heavenly glory.

My Marian consecration is the acceptance that this Mother – Jesus’ Mother – is my mother too, and as such continues in heaven her maternal role in the growth of divine life in my soul.

For this reason, my consecration to Mary is different than any other devotion to the saints. I have a devotion to St. Maximilian Kolbe, but I am consecrated to Mary. My consecration is a way of union with our Mother that is an ongoing attachment to her as to a principle of our salvation – something more than simply a few prayers and practices. I am “with her” and she “with me” as she lives in the presence of Jesus Christ, resurrected and glorified.

As the unique Mother of God, she is “full of grace” – a grace redounding into her body, and in her bodily Assumption she makes the fullness of Marian transformation possible. We are baptized into Christ, not Mary, but she is the only earthly “wayfarer” among us who experiences the fullness of the Beatific Vision and is as a “window” for us in both the intellectual vision and physical beholding of the Triune God. Unlike the saints in heaven, who have the intellectual vision only, and this imperfectly until the resurrection of the body, Mary beholds with her human eye the radiance of her Son in His glorified Body, and through her bodily senses, the fullness of joy resulting from this encounter is at every moment “felt” in both her body and soul. Mary and Jesus in this moment have vocal cords with which they can speak my name and their voices can be heard by the other with human ears. Imagine the joy that floods her soul and body upon hearing His voice! Mary is the only wayfarer who experiences such intimacy with Jesus, and by our



Assumption of the Virgin, Pinturicchio. Image in the public domain.

consecration, we “tap into” the merits of her personal experience of ecstasy.

Anthropologically, Mary’s Assumption showcases the power of Marian consecration. For this reason, the fullness of Marian transformation through Marian consecration is most uniquely lived in women.

Mary’s divine motherhood reaching its fullness with her bodily Assumption is foundational to the spiritual motherhood dimension of Marian consecration and the feminine genius.

Woman’s biology is informed by her nature and her physiology is expressed in a nurturing, life-giving and receptive awareness of the “other.” Etched into her psyche, woman’s natural propensity to receive is the natural lens for relationships. That reality that the human soul and body are not two separate entities, lies at the heart of the feminine genius which is her spiritual motherhood. As a person, “I” am not only my body. “I” am not only my soul. I am the intimate union of my body and soul.

Mary lives “now” the fulfillment of human life in the Beatific Vision, and the end of humanity is realized in her. She is the complete embodied human perfection united by intellect and will with God, her life infinitely more real and freer than ours, anchored in heaven by her divine maternity as the wayfarer’s participation in the beatitude of the blessed. Therefore, she is not an exception but a fulfillment: the economy of salvation for all humanity has reached its end in one person already: Mary! Jesus made her the mother of all wayfarers – “Behold thy Mother” – and in her glorified state, she even now anchors us in the glory of God. †

Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

The Sisters renew their Marian consecration daily in common by reciting the following prayer together before the Blessed Sacrament:

I, N., a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands, O Immaculate Mother, the vows of my Baptism; I renounced forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

In the presence of all the heavenly court, I choose thee this day for my Mother and Mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present, and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right of disposing of my, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God, in time and in eternity. Amen.

I AM IN THY HANDS, O MARY

By Sister Mary Bethany, OP



The above drawing is original art by Sister Chiara Luce, OP, and was the inspiration for this article.

We each have our share of experiences that remain engraved in our memories. For the Sisters, foremost among these is the treasured day of our profession of vows. Also etched deeply in my heart is the day – no less transformative – of reception to the habit: the hours beforehand marked by bursting anticipation, the last-minute flurry of nerves and preparations, and the euphoric moment of hearing Mother pronounce my new religious name for the first time.

Yet most prominent in my memory is the hymn sung as the new novices processed out of the chapel, freshly clothed in the gleaming white habit of St. Dominic. An original composition by one of our foundresses, the Marian hymn both anchored me and expressed the flood of emotions in the wake of the gift I had just received.

***I am in thy hands, O Mary,
Mold and fashion this clay I am.
Give it a form and break it again.
Thou art its mistress, it may not complain.
I am satisfied that it could serve thy purpose...***

As I ponder this moment nine years later, I see it as an image of something essential to our vocation as Sisters of Mary: the trusting surrender each Sister makes to Jesus through Mary through her total consecration according to the de Montfort method.

By placing in her hands our very selves, along with all our goods of body and soul, we give Mary permission to “mold and fashion” the clay of our lives; to clothe us, not just with the Dominican habit, but with her maternal love and virtues; and to shape us in our identity and vocation as spouses of Christ and spiritual mothers.

St. Louis de Montfort describes total consecration as a “short, easy, perfect, and secure means of attaining union with Our Lord.” For every soul seeking deeper intimacy with Jesus, “to whom shall we go” but to our Mother, who seeks nothing else but to lead us, transform us, and conform us to her Son? †

Inspired by Beauty

A TRANSFORMING GAZE

by Sister John Mary, OP

Can a gaze be transforming?

The Spiritual Canticle, a poem by St. John of the Cross, relates the soul’s quest for union with God by means of a stirring dialogue between Bride and Bridegroom. The fifth stanza expresses the reality that the Bridegroom’s very glance upon His creation effects a transformation, arraying it with His own image:

Pouring out a thousand graces,
He passed these groves in haste;
And having looked at them,
With his image alone,
Clothed them in beauty.

Is Mary’s gaze transforming? The pilgrim who ponders the sculpture of Our Lady and the Holy Child adorning the Mary, Queen of Ireland Oratory at the National Shrine in Washington, DC, is deeply drawn by the gaze of the Blessed Mother upon her Son. The young Mother’s eyes serenely rest upon the toddler-aged Christ with maternal tenderness and contentment. We are invited to turn to Mary with confidence, placing ourselves under her gaze, knowing that she will assuredly draw us closer to her Son. Happily seated in His Mother’s lap, the Holy Child Jesus gazes outward, smiling with delight and with arms playfully outstretched. It is as if Mary sees that His desire is to be placed in our arms and she is prepared to present Him to us.

Mary’s heart is a place where we can find rest, in her gaze of love, knowing she beholds us all as sons and daughters. She looks upon each of us with love and care. She delights to lead us to Jesus!

Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. †



THROUGH MARY TO JESUS!

By Sister Joseph Andrew, OP

“Mary is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus.”

- St. Louis de Montfort

At times as I am praying or walking cloister halls or involved in our apostolate of preaching, I find myself suddenly overwhelmed with the question: Why is God so good to us? And even more intimately: Why does He entrust the Dominican Order so totally to His Mother Mary? My mind is amazed to consider 800 years of graces which began with the humble Spanish friar, Dominic de Guzman, whose openness to the Holy Spirit prompted the Church to bring forth the Order of Preachers in response to the dualistic heresy of his day (and ours!). Dominic would send forth an incarnational family whom he named Sons and Daughters of Mary. Whether it be the Order’s wearing of the white scapular which Mary gave to Blessed Reginald of Orleans, so as to clothe us in garments that anticipate our wedding garments of heaven, or devotion to the rosary – our Marian weapon against the evil one – which we wear on our left side for ready combat, or the way each Dominican ends each day (and will find our lives closing) with the singing of the Salve Regina, we simply cannot get enough of our Mother Mary!

As our particular community was being founded in 1997, we became prayerfully convinced that the Holy Spirit willed the title “Mary, Mother of the Eucharist” to reflect Mary’s most amazing tribute to her Son, her fiat to become His Mother and thus to enable His incarnational gift to all mankind in the Holy Eucharist. This fit perfectly into the Church’s guidance concerning the new millennium. Still, we wondered if there was yet more that we could give Jesus through His Mother. The answer came through the teaching of our Dominican brother, St. Louis de Montfort, which was also being highlighted by the saintly Pope John Paul II’s chosen motto *Totus tuus... Through Mary, I am wholly yours, Jesus.*

Through this Marian consecration, we daily renew our Marian receptivity to grace! St. Louis de Montfort’s *True Devotion to Mary* helps us recognize the Virgin as the greatest of all saints, a fierce advocate against Satan, and a model of holiness for Christian disciples and particularly for women espoused to Christ through religious vows and our ensuing spiritual motherhood.

Recently, I was blessed to be a pilgrim at the miraculous shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in southern France. Standing outside the spacious Rosary Basilica, I gazed upon the semicircular white marble entry facade depicting Mary handing the rosary to St. Dominic, and as my hand caressed my rosary, I knew I was home. Inside, I prayed the fifteen traditional mysteries as any good Dominican would! But beyond this, I felt that familiar interior tug-of-heart wherein God was asking more, and as my eyes searched the upper wall of the sanctuary, I found it: a mosaic depicting Mary with outstretched arms and the caption in the original French of St. Louis de Montfort: *Par Marie à Jésus* (“Through Mary to Jesus”). Perhaps the desired “more” of Marian devotion that the foundresses left to our community will always be fulfilled in this prayerful inscription. As Mary is “Mother of the Eucharist,” her greatest desire will always be to gather all her children in her heart and gift us back to her Son. That alone is enough. †



The above photo was taken during Sr. Joseph Andrew’s recent pilgrimage to Lourdes, France.

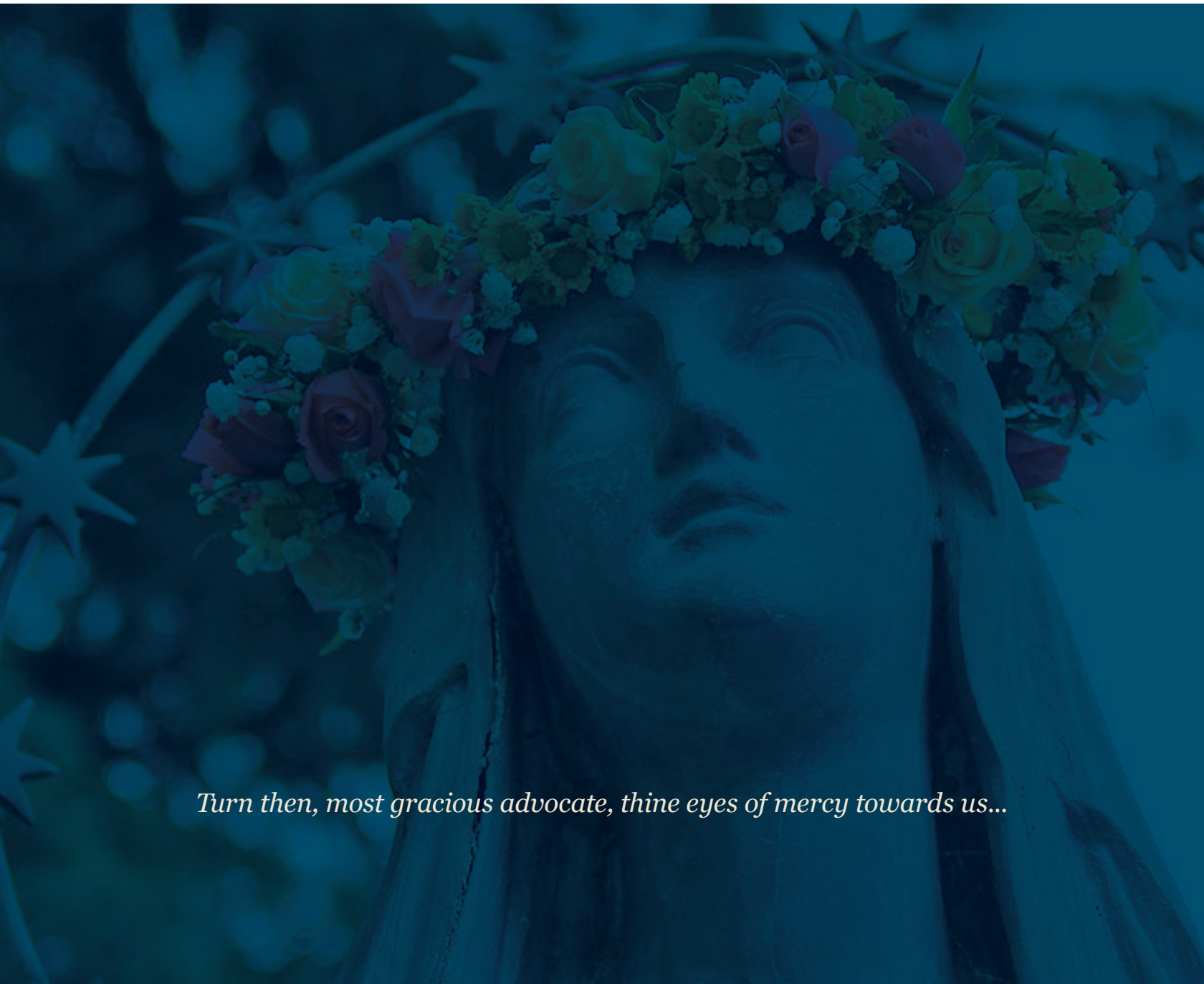




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Mother of the Eucharist

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