



Dominican Sisters of Mary  
Mother of the Eucharist

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# MATER Eucharistiae

A PUBLICATION OF THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MARY, MOTHER OF THE EUCHARIST



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**Dominican Sisters of Mary**  
*Mother of the Eucharist*

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## DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

One of the most beautiful and powerful moments in the lives of our Sisters are those moments when students who are not Catholic or Christian come forward and express a desire for deeper union with Christ through the Sacraments. Working closely with the local bishop and the pastor of the parish or chaplain of the school, the Sisters have been privileged to support these students' desires by providing catechetical teaching and accompaniment as students enter the various stages of Christian Initiation! Our Sisters have walked with students of all ages – from elementary through college – as they have journeyed closer to Jesus. In some instances, the students' desires have also prompted their parents and siblings to choose a similar journey!

In this issue of *Mater Eucharistiae*, we are so happy to share several stories from our apostolate of students receiving the Sacraments and thus coming to new life. We also include in this issue an article that briefly describes the next steps for when students approach the Sisters with their desires for deeper union with the Lord in His Sacraments. Allow the articles and images in this issue to deepen your own gratitude for the graces of the Sacraments in your life, or perhaps to inspire you to grow in your Sacramental life. With St. Augustine, we exclaim: "Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself. Do you understand and grasp, brethren, God's grace toward us? Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ." (CCC 795)

As we approach the end of the year, we would like to give some updates from the life of our community as well! This includes images from our final and first profession ceremonies this summer, the names of our new novices, the entrance of our newest members, the postulants, and a photo page from our visits with treasured friends and benefactors throughout the year. We send this with our love and promise of prayers to all.

Faithfully in Christ,



*Mother Amata Veritas Ellenbecker, OP*  
Prioress General

**ON THE COVER**

*Photograph of the Rosary Shrine  
of the Dominican Friars, by Rev.  
Lawrence Lew, OP*





# OUR STUDENTS AND THE SACRAMENTS

The Sacraments bring us into direct contact with God's love and power. As Sisters, our entire life is centered around the sacramental life. The Sacraments are concrete signs that bestow grace to make the Christian life possible and to live the life of heaven here on earth.

Imagine, then, the joy we experience when our students receive the Sacraments for the first time, especially Baptism.

*"[Baptism] is the first of the Sacraments, inasmuch as it is the door which allows Christ the Lord to dwell in our person and allows us to be immersed in his Mystery." Pope Francis, General Audience, April 11, 2018*

How beautiful it is to celebrate this new life in the Church! In every age, Jesus calls all people into the mystery of His divine life. In this issue, several Sisters tell the stories of their students who received their Sacraments of Initiation. Some received the Sacrament of Confirmation and their first reception of Holy Communion, while others were baptized as well. Through prayer and witness, these students heard the voice of God calling them to union with Him, and they answered. †





Photo courtesy of St. Mary's High School in Manhasset



# THE POWER OF INVITATION

## GROWING AN OCIA PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By Sister Miriam, OP

One of the greatest blessings of my religious life has been helping high school students towards the Sacraments of Initiation. The high school OCIA programs I've been involved with have varied according to the needs of the high school and the guidelines of the diocese. At JSerra High School, we are blessed to have an upswing in the number of students seeking the Sacraments. We are so grateful to Bishop Kevin Vann and auxiliary Bishop Timothy Freyer for assisting and supporting us in the development of an OCIA program suitable to the particular needs of our students. As part of preparation for the Sacraments, students complete requirements such as the OCIA Rites, regular formation classes, and retreats. We also assist them in getting tapped into their local parish for Sunday Mass.

Students at JSerra who are open to the possibility of receiving the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation) have several supports in place to assist them in their discernment and formation. With a strong theology curriculum and weekly all-school Mass, the students are exposed to the teachings of the Church and liturgical worship. One of the unique assets of the school is the presence of the National Evangelization



Team (NET). The team of eight missionaries organize evening fellowship events, praise and worship, grade-level retreats, and discipleship groups. Retreats are an essential part of the process towards the Sacraments. Many of the students at JSerra attribute the decision to become Catholic to an experience of God's love during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on a school retreat.

*One thing I've learned over the years is the importance of a personal invitation*

At JSerra we administer a survey to all the students at the beginning of the year to find out more about where they are in their faith and how we can support them. Typically, each year around 200-300 students of the 1250 in our student body respond that they might be interested in becoming Catholic and want to know more about the process. All of these students are approached for a follow-up conversation by a Sister, teacher, or campus minister who knows them well. From these conversations we determine how best to support these students, whether it's directing them to a NET discipleship group, welcoming them to more intentionally discern becoming Catholic, or encouraging them to attend school retreats or fellowship events.

Ultimately, if we are truly living the faith and giving witness to Christ, the hearts of the students are captivated by the beauty of it and desire to be a part of it. May we as Christians give witness to Christ's love wherever we go, and may hearts be converted to His love. May we fulfill the great commission to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. †



Students at JSerra enjoy faith sharing and fellowship at the Sisters' convent.



# THE WITNESS OF NEW LIFE

*By Sister Maria Francisco, OP*

I had the privilege of helping eight of my middle school boys from Bishop Louis Reicher Catholic School receive the Sacraments this Easter Vigil. Four of them were baptized, and all eight of them were confirmed and received their first Holy Communion. These eight young men were on the football and basketball teams and so were a powerful witness for the school. Their response to hearing God's invitation and following Him helped the school community live out and prepare for the Triduum in a more intentional way.

The more I prepared the students for the Easter Vigil, the more I learned to appreciate the beauty of the liturgy and how Holy Mother Church teaches us how to pray and prepare to live out our share in Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The baptismal liturgy at the Easter Vigil starts with the prayer imploring the Church to "come to the aid of these our brothers and sisters in their blessed hope" by our intercession. This prayer led me to start a school wide social media challenge during Holy Week, to encourage the whole community to "come to the aid of" our students through our prayers. The challenge also served to catechize students, parents, and the faculty about the Triduum and the beauty of the liturgy during Holy Week. It culminated with "packing the Church" for the Easter Vigil, to share in the joy of our students receiving the Sacraments.

It was such a gift to be able to be at the Easter Vigil and see the joyful expectation of my students reach its fulfillment. To see these young men make their profession of faith, become adopted children of God, be confirmed, and see their faces beaming after receiving Holy Communion, was such a powerful manifestation of God's love for His Church.

Since the Easter Vigil, over half of the young men who received the Sacraments have been trained as altar servers and have served at the school Masses. They continue to bear witness to their classmates and the school of the joy they have received by their share in Christ's life and to invite others to do the same. †



Top: Sr. Maria Francisco with her students.  
Bottom: "The Baptism of Christ," Fra Angelico, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons





**Dominican Sisters of Mary**  
*Mother of the Eucharist*

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- POPE FRANCIS



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Photos courtesy of JSerra Catholic High School





# RECEIVE THE LIGHT

## HOW THE SACRAMENTS CONFORM US TO JESUS CHRIST

By Sr. Rene Noel, OP

The symbol of a candle is such a poignant one: the candle spends itself to give light to the room in which it is lit. And yet, a candle cannot light itself: it needs another source of light greater than itself to become light. At Baptism, the simple phrase “Receive the light of Christ” is said to the newly baptized as they are given a candle lit from the Paschal candle.

In the 2022-23 school year at JSerra I had the privilege to walk with several students who were baptized at the Easter Vigil. While the Easter Vigil itself was incredibly beautiful, I was more struck witnessing the change in them in the weeks that followed. Their light began to “shine before men” (Mt. 5:16)—no longer a human light, but a gift from the Lord.

Shortly after the baptisms, I was at an all-school Mass sitting with the newly baptized. I didn’t know the student whom I was sitting next to particularly well, though we had spoken several times during his preparation. I chatted with him before Mass about what he would say to Jesus at Holy Communion—his 3<sup>rd</sup> ever!

During Mass the students were particularly joyful and



Photo courtesy of Bishop Louis Reicher Catholic School

reverent. Perhaps everyone felt the graces their peers had received just days before. I remember the profound hush as Communion finished; the young man came back to his seat after receiving the Eucharist and flashed me a quick smile. It caught me completely off-guard!

*In that one glance was all the radiance, joy, and peace of Christ Himself.*

It was as if Jesus was looking back at me. Profoundly moved, I was reminded of the reality that through the Sacraments, Christ lives in us! “Remain in Me, as I remain in you,” Christ tells us. This high school student was no longer shining his own light, but Christ’s, with all the power and beauty within it to illuminate others.

As the weeks rolled on, I could see that same light shining from all our neophytes: God was dwelling in them, and they now carry His light with them wherever they go. This profound reality is explained by the name we often take so casually: “Christians”—literally “little Christs.” Would that this truth become a visible reality in each one of us! “You are the light of the world...your light must shine before men” (Mt 5:14, 16). †



Photo courtesy of St. Mary’s High School in Manhasset



# THE SUPERPOWERS OF JESUS!

*An Interview with Sr. Monica Marie, OP and Dorothy Gao*

*I first met Dorothy Gao in the fall of 2021 when she was a student in my freshman Theology course. Dorothy is a brilliant and talented student from China who jumped into learning English and studying Christianity for the first time with incredible tenacity. She turned in the following drawing as her culminating project after learning about the Sacraments in my class. I have been honored to see the Holy Spirit working in Dorothy with a superabundance of actual grace which inspired in her a great reverence and desire for the Sacraments. I have told Dorothy that I think she could write a book to share the astounding ways God has lovingly worked in her life! It was an incredible gift and joy to journey with her towards receiving the Sacraments of Initiation this past Easter season!*



Sr. Monica Marie with Dorothy Gao,  
Photo from St. Mary's in Manhasset

## Which part of your drawing is your favorite? Why?

My favorite part is the huge Jesus. I spent lots of time drawing Him. I want people to first see Jesus large and in the center because Jesus is first. Jesus is the heart of the world and the heart of everything. I chose to show Jesus on the cross because I want to remind people of how Jesus sacrificed Himself to take away our sin.

## What inspired you to put the Sacraments as a frame in your drawing? What does it symbolize?

When I drew this I was learning about the Sacraments for the first time. I want people to notice and see the connection between Jesus, the Church, and the Sacraments. The Sacraments are important because they are the visible sign of the reality of Jesus Christ and the way we get the gift from God. The Sacraments are the superpowers of Jesus. Seven superpowers!

## Can you explain why you chose to put clouds around the church in the top frame of your drawing?

First, I wanted to depict the majesty and authority of the Church. Second, I wanted the clouds to show heaven, which is the highest place. That's why I put the clouds and the Church on the top. The Church is the body of Christ and represents the bridge between God and man.

## Can you tell me more about the sheep and the river they are drinking from?

The sheep represent human beings and the river they are drinking from is flowing from Jesus' body. Two things flowed from Jesus' body: blood and water. The blood which we drink brings us salvation and forgiveness. Jesus shares His divine life with us when we drink His blood. The water represents Baptism, which washes away our sins.

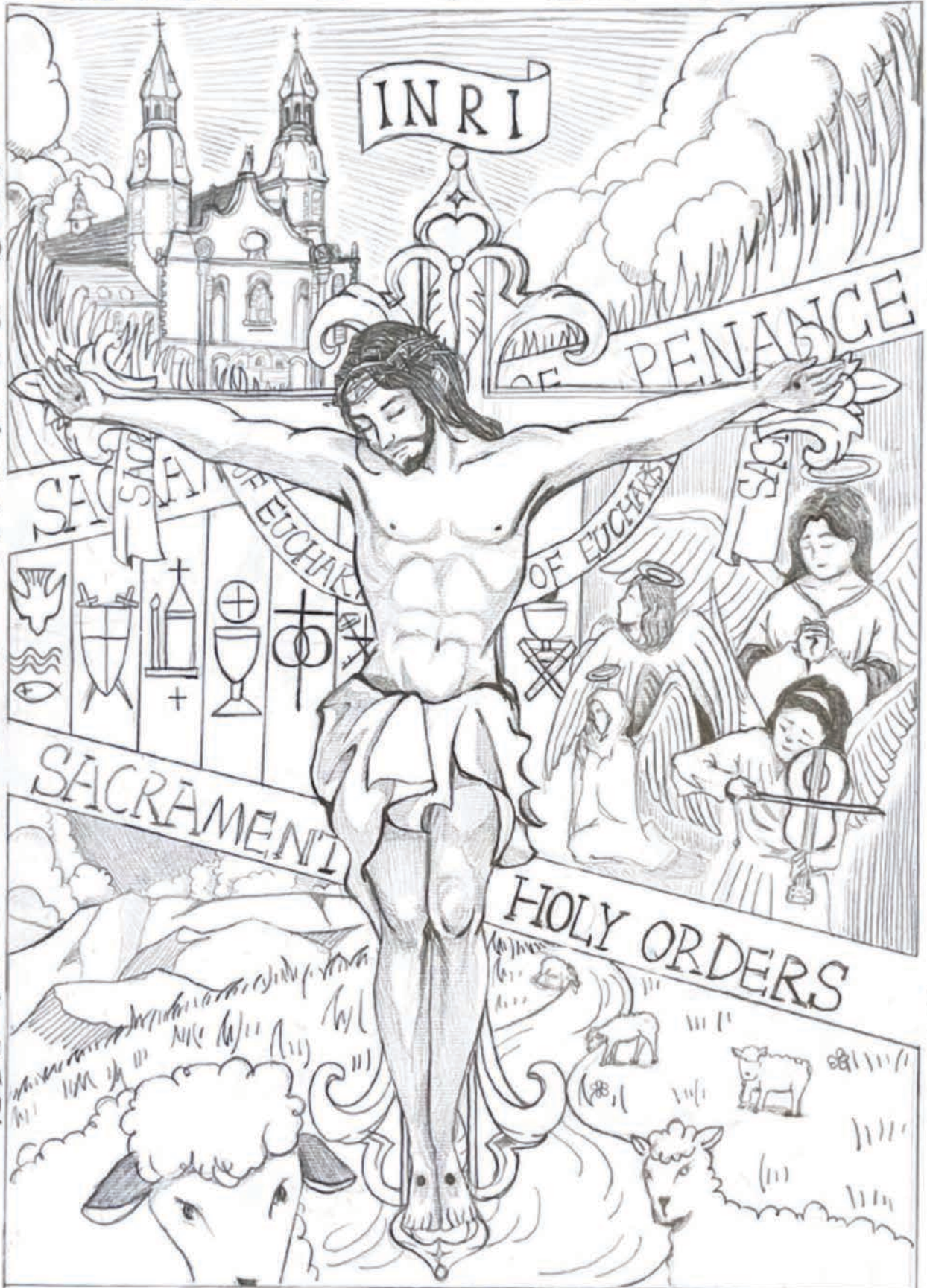
## What do you most hope that people will learn when they look at your drawing?

I want people to learn that the only way we get salvation is to enter into a relationship with God. We need to be thankful for the gift of the Sacraments that God has given us! We are able to become part of Jesus' body: Christ is the head, we are the body. †



# SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF SICK



SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

# SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY





# COME, SPOUSE OF CHRIST!



## FIRST PROFESSION (TOP PHOTO)

Eight Sisters professed their first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience on July 27. We were privileged to have Bishop Robert McClory of the Diocese of Gary to celebrate the Mass of Religious Profession. We are grateful for the presence of so many priests and religious who came to share our joy!

[Front row] Mother Amata Veritas, Sr. Edith Augustine, Sr. Maria Angelico, Sr. John Magdalene, Sr. Maria Lourdes, Bishop McClory, Sr. Francis de Sales, Sr. Felicity, Sr. Margaret Andrew, Sr. Maria Carlo, and Sr. Louis Marie (Novice Mistress).

## PERPETUAL PROFESSION (BOTTOM PHOTO)

Three of our Sisters professed perpetual vows on July 25 this summer! As they pronounced their vows, "...for all my life," our hearts filled with gratitude to God for the amazing gift of their religious vocations. May the Lord bless their "yes" to Him! †

[Standing] Sr. Elizabeth Ann, Sr. Joseph Andrew, Sr. Mary Michael, Sr. Basil Marie, Sr. Mary Avila, Sr. Mary Aquinas, Sr. Louis Marie, Mother Assumpta, Sr. Mary Samuel [Seated] Mother Amata Veritas, Bishop Earl Boyea.



**IN THE CHURCH'S TRADITION  
RELIGIOUS PROFESSION IS  
CONSIDERED TO BE A SPECIAL AND  
FRUITFUL DEEPENING OF THE  
CONSECRATION RECEIVED IN BAPTISM.**

**POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II, *VITA CONSECRATA*, 1995**





# DESIRING THE HABIT

## “SISTER, WHAT DO YOU DESIRE?”

This question is at the heart of becoming a novice. As a postulant, the Sister gets to know the community, deepens her prayer, and continues to ask what the Lord wants for her. Does she still thirst for more? At the reception to the habit, Mother asks, “Sister, what do you desire?” The new novice answers, “The mercy of God and yours, and to be received to the habit of St. Dominic.” Then Mother places each part of the habit into her eager hands. Every piece of the habit carries the Dominican tradition: white for innocence, black for penance. The innocence we strive for meets the penance required for our sins in the loving mercy of Jesus. The new novice is now a “beginner” who seeks to give herself even more to religious life to discover the will of her heavenly Father. Clothed in the habit of St. Dominic, she continues to live out her desire for Christ. †



Upper left: Sr. Maria Caritas receives her new name and the habit of the Dominican Order, including the 15-decade rosary.  
Upper right: Sr. Josephine enters the chapel as a clothed novice for the first time.  
Bottom, from left to right: Sr. Maria Luke, Sr. Judith Marie, Sr. Maria Caritas, Sr. Regina Caeli, and Sr. Josephine.





# NEW ARRIVALS! POSTULANTS 2023

ON AUGUST 28, THE FEAST OF ST. AUGUSTINE, THREE YOUNG WOMEN JOYFULLY PUT ON THEIR "POSTULANT BLUES." THEY HAVE "CAST OUT INTO THE DEEP" TO FOLLOW THE CALL OF CHRIST!



**SR. LAUREN**

*Diocese of  
Wilmington,  
Delaware*

Before entering, I had many other goals, dreams, and desires, but there was always something missing. The Lord called me to give more of my time in prayer, then more of my heart. At some point, I realized that I wanted to give Him even more. As the Lord drew me closer, the idea of religious life kept rising in my prayer, but I was scared to discern. He pursued my heart so gently through daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and the spiritual fatherhood of a few wonderful priests, especially Fr. Tom O’Flanagan and Fr. Andre LaSana, LC. Like Isaiah, I did not hear the Lord in an earthquake or a loud roaring sound. Rather, He spoke to me in soft quiet wind, a whisper. One night in Adoration, He made His call clear. It was a moment I will never forget and can never adequately describe. With confidence in His call and love for me, I prayed about which attributes I desired in a religious community. The top two were a devotion to the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Naturally, I came across the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. It was all right there in the name!



**SR. SHELBY**

*Diocese of  
Peoria, Illinois*

As a new Catholic the question of my vocation arose, but I never thought I would be called to religious life. While teaching at Peoria Notre Dame High School, I had the privilege of working with many religious sisters, including the Dominican Sisters of Mary. They asked to me attend one of their vocation retreats, and the Lord used that time to continually, gently prompt my heart that it might be made for religious life. The gentle whispers soon became louder, and after praying a 54-day Rosary Novena, I felt Mary nudging me toward her son. I took this intention with me on a pilgrimage to Fatima and the Camino Santiago, and with total clarity the Lord spoke to my heart. A deep desire for this vocation started to grow within me. There were many consolations in prayer; and the Lord in His goodness opened all of the doors to enter. I am thankful to the many priests who have walked with me during my conversion and discernment including Fr. Patrick Henehan, Fr. Chase Hilgenbrink, Fr. Corey Krenziel, Fr. Daniel McShane, and Fr. David Richardson. I feel blessed to be here.



**SR. STEPHANIE**

*Diocese of  
Venice, Florida*

I was born and raised in sunny Sarasota, Florida, where I attended Catholic elementary and middle school. In my fifth grade year, I first felt the call towards religious life after I had met a Sister. Not knowing much of what the life was about, I never inquired further. At the end of my eighth grade year, I attended a Steubenville Conference in Orlando. This was a pivotal moment not only for discerning my vocation, but also for deepening my relationship with Christ. Coming back from this retreat, I began researching communities and working more on my prayer life. A friend of mine had encountered the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist at Ave Maria University and mentioned how joyful they were. In April of 2022, I had the opportunity to attend a retreat and see what religious life was about. Over the summer, I felt myself being pulled back to the community, and in the following summer I was accepted as a postulant! +



## MEDITATION

# LIFE-GIVING SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

By Sr. John Michael, OP

When Thomas asked if he could speak with me after class, I assumed he was going to schedule a time to make up his history test with me. I was not at all prepared for his question: “Sister, I want to be baptized. Can you help me?” *I’m sorry, say that again?* “I realized that once high school ends, I won’t have the chance to go to Mass, and I want Mass to be part of my life because I know Jesus is there.”

Moments like these are beautiful gifts that I receive as a Sister who teaches high school students. My greatest joy is to accompany students – particularly those who are not yet baptized – on their journey of faith to Jesus through the Sacraments. Every conversation I have with them is a miracle of grace. Each student articulates their desire differently, but ultimately one simple, common thread unites all the reasons they give for seeking Baptism. They, like Thomas, have encountered Jesus Christ and want to be with Him forever.

On the day of their Baptism, I am

strongly reminded of my role as their spiritual mother. There is perhaps no greater moment in a mother’s life than the day she gives birth to her



child. In a very real way, a Sister experiences this part of her spiritual motherhood as she witnesses one of her students be born again in Baptism. As I watched the water flow over Thomas’ head, all I could think about was his soul – stained with original sin plus the sins of his 16-year-old life – now free from the spiritual bondage that had held it captive his whole life.

Externally these young people remain much the same. Overnight angelic transformation generally does not occur, as I discovered in the next class when I asked Thomas about his history assignment. With a twinkle in his eye, Thomas told me, “I couldn’t do the homework last night, Sister, because I was celebrating my Baptism with my family.” *Fair enough, Thomas.* What is amazing, however, is that over time, God’s sanctifying grace *does* work in their souls. They approach the struggles of high school armed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they now have recourse to confession when they fail. Often the responsibility that comes with practicing the faith brings about a new maturity. My heart melted each time Thomas proudly reported to me on Monday that he had attended Sunday Mass. While he thanked me for helping him, really it is I who should be thanking Thomas and students like him. Because of them, I get to experience firsthand the beautiful mystery of Baptism in Christ. †

“Madonna and Child” by Sandro Botticelli. Image in the public domain.



# Inspired by Beauty

## MEDITATION IN GLASS

*By: Sr. Maria Jerome, OP*

When I was a little girl going to Mass at the Cathedral of St. Helena with my family, we sat in the pews next to this marvelous stained-glass window, one of fifty-nine priceless works of art designed and produced in Munich, Bavaria, and installed in the Cathedral between 1908 and 1926. This window is one of thirty-seven showing the sequence of salvation history, from the fall of Adam and Eve to the Church. Of course, I didn't know any of this. I didn't know who the people were or what they were doing – I just liked the donkey and leopard, the beautiful figures in jewel tones so exquisitely realistic in their poses, the depth of the scene and the countless careful details that indicate a true artist at work. I was intrigued by the tiny shield in the lower right of the scene (the signature of the designer) and read over and over again the words inscribed along the bottom: "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not near. A star shall rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel and shall strike the chiefs of Moab."

Who were these people? What was going on? How do these words fit with this picture? The beauty of this fifteen-foot-tall scene, painstakingly etched and cut from thousands of pieces of tinted glass, draws churchgoers young and old into meditation on Scripture when they ask these questions, searching for answers in the same place that the designers found inspiration, the Word of God. In the upcoming season of Advent, this is a particularly fitting image for meditation, as the pagan prophet Balaam (in the book of Numbers) predicts the coming of one who "shall rule," a prophecy fulfilled twelve hundred years later with the coming of Christ.

*Photo: Diocese of Helena, Montana*

This image of Balaam portrays a prophecy of the coming of Jesus from the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament. As Advent approaches, take some time to ponder the Incarnation as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament. Scan the QR code for a guided meditation on the Annunciation, using the Life of Christ series on Openlight Media.







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### Includes:

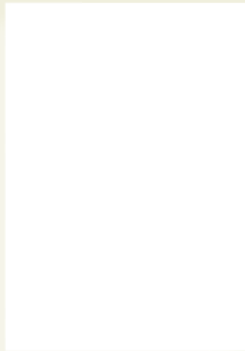
- Prayers
- Scripture
- Saints
- Numerous practical examples
- Reflection and discussion questions



## HOW WILL YOU JOURNEY THROUGH ADVENT?

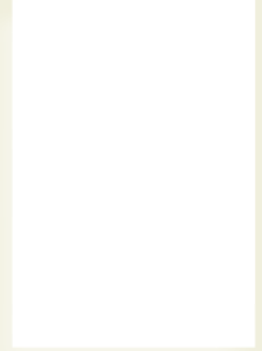
### The Jesse Tree Advent Journal

Our most requested lectio divina journal is a guided meditation on the beautiful story of the Jesse Tree, the prophecy about a branch shooting up from the stump of Jesse. Enjoy daily doodling prompts on each of the Jesse Tree symbols for added fun!



### Mother of Life Advent Journal

This journal guides you into a deeper hope this Advent season through the Mass readings, Scripture and practicing the virtues.



“The one who has hope lives differently; the one who has hope has been granted the gift of a new life” (Pope Benedict XVI *Spe Salvi*, 2).





God's generosity is reflected in the goodness of those who walk with us in our call to preach, teach, and witness to the beauty of our Catholic Faith and the depths of God's love for each soul He has created!

**From left to right:**

- What a gift to spend time with the beautiful Bozanic family and witness the dedication of these faithful parents in Tallahassee!
- Sr. Mary Samuel thoroughly enjoyed her time visiting with Fred and Donna Leonard, beautiful friends of the Sisters, in Houston, TX!
- One half of the faithful Donovan crew (we missed Jim!), Sr. Mary Michael was blessed to meet Flo in New Orleans this year!
- Mother Assumpta and Sr. Joseph Andrew soak up the joy and love of Faith during their visit with the Lemmon family!



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**O Eternal God, behold me now prostrate  
before Your immense majesty in humblest adoration.**

**I offer You all my thoughts, words, actions,  
joys, sufferings, and intentions of this day.**

**I intend to do all for Your love and Your glory;  
to fulfill Your Divine Will,  
to serve You, to praise You, to bless You...**

*This is an excerpt from the Sisters' Morning Offering.*