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# TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

*A Quarterly Marian Magazine*



**Montfort Marian Centre, Bengaluru**

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## Images of Mary

The woman loved the autumn afternoons. The quiet sun rested more peacefully on the toast-coloured stones of her home. A lone eagle floated in the cloudless sky. This was intermission time in her small village – the pause between siesta and the companionable noises of supper preparation. She found a centre of inner peace and stayed there, until... the purposeful young man had been searching for her. The old village had several winding streets that misled him, until he finally found her. He could tell he was intruding somehow, but he wanted to meet her. He felt awkward, somewhere between his impulsive nature and innate sense of respect. He went about looking hither and thither.

His name was John and he had recently become a follower of Jesus. He needed to know what the woman was like. He sat on the ground before her and took the hem of her cloak and kissed it. "You are his Mother." The woman remembered. She was good at that. She had a way of storing memories. She saw the scene again, the noisy and curious visitors who wanted to look at her, the glib praise and the startling response. She made it a memory and polished its beauty. To this eager young man she said: "Those who hear the Word of God and keep it... They are his mother" (Mk 3: 34-35). This was a scene from Franco Zeffirelli's television film, *Jesus of Nazareth*. It basically depicted the Gospel scene, so also it presents Mary as her Sons' first disciple. When Jesus spoke those words, he knew that Mary understood best how to hear God's word and keep it.

In 431, When the Council of Ephesus declared Mary to be *Theotokos* – the Mother of God- enthusiastic believers coursed through the hymns and carrying candles and praising God for his singular honour given to her. If our faith ever needed a poet to celebrate Mary, we found the best man in Saint Bernard, whose *Missus Est* sermons brought the mystery of the annunciation unforgettably to our attention. Here he gave us the image of a woman who made the most consequential decision in history, her 'yes' to the Incarnation. In the middle ages the Church placed before the world the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It was a daring and unpopular decision. In 1950, Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of Marys' Assumption. The Church said, "Look at Mary' Body clothed with the Sun, crowned with stars, honoured and exalted by Father, Son, Spirit." It was not just a question of flesh, but of the dignity of the human person and the enduring grounds for hope that the mystery reveals.

When Paul VI searched for a contemporary image of Mary that seemed to suit our times best, he selected the title Mother of the Church. St. John Paul II gathered up the implications of this image in his inspiring encyclical "Mother of the Redeemer," and wrote one of his most lyrical passages on "Woman behold your Son," to her motherhood of the Church. It is one thing for a Christian disciple to know that Mary is offered to him or her as a spiritual mother. The next step is to welcome her into one's house. We need to invite Mary into our homes and hearts. Mary is more than John's houseguest. Mary becomes a presence in his inner life. Mary must become a presence in our inner lives as well. The mystery of Mary affected the life of John in a positive and productive way. She can do the same for us once we have welcomed her into the privacy of our souls.

What does she tell you and me when we invite her into our home? She says, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). She points us to Jesus and asks us to be his disciples. She wants us to realize that Jesus is the one mediator between the Father and ourselves. He is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14: 6). Mary is so identified with Jesus that St. Bernard says, "Look now upon the face that most resembles Christ, for only through its brightness can you prepare your vision to see him". Mary wants our face to resemble Christ's. Is it our goal to be Christ like? We have the articles bringing forth the images of Mary and helping us reflect the face of Christ in our life. These insightful articles challenge us to live the spirit of Mary in our pilgrimage of faith as the children of God and as unique members of the Church.

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# To be Like Mary, to bring the World Nearer to God

Mayamma Joseph, ASI

Bringing the world nearer to God is a mission that each and every Christian needs to carry out with passion. 'Doing the right thing' is the most challenging task that we face in today's world as before us are an array of options each time we need to make a choice. St. John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* writes: *"Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of 'doing for the sake of doing'. We must resist the temptation by trying 'to be' before trying 'to do'."* In our pursuit of trying to be, we have a model - Mary, the virgin most Holy, the Chosen One. So let us learn to be like Mary to be fruitful in our mission to bring the world nearer to God.

Most of us would have heard about the story of a wise man and a scorpion. While bathing in a river along with his disciples, a wise man saw a scorpion in the water struggling for life. Knowing that scorpions cannot swim, he tried to save it by lifting it with his hands. But he could not succeed in this attempt as the scorpion's sting made him fling his hands instinctively and the scorpion fell back into the river. The wise man lifted the sinking scorpion from the water once again and the scorpion's sting him made him fail again. With a determined mind to save the scorpion from the water the wise man tried to pull it out of the water a third time and he was stung by the scorpion a third time. However, he finally managed to save it from the water. The disciples of the wise man were so curious to know as to why their master

continued in his attempt to save the scorpion knowing that it would sting him. The master's reply took them by surprise. "It is the nature of the scorpion to sting and it is my nature to save. Why should I let a small scorpion rob me of the divine nature which I have cultivated through years of practice?" This wise man's response continues to be relevant at all times. "If someone does an evil act, why should I change my divine nature?" As we read in the Psalms, those who climb the mountain of the Lord are the ones with clean hands, pure hearts and those who do not do worthless things. Erasing evil in and around us might appear to be an unrealistic goal. But all of us can nurture the goodness in us and let the true image of God shine in and through us and help everyone do so; making every one closer to God. Let us be taught by Mary and let us be like Mary- the virgin mother of the redeemer. St. Louis de Montfort reminds us, *"We must look upon Mary as an accomplished model of every virtue and perfection that the Holy Spirit has fashioned in any simple creature. We will then be able to imitate her in the way suitable to each of us."*

## To be like Mary; to move from clutter to clarity

Clutter means to fill or cover with scattered or disordered things that impede movements or reduce effectiveness. Clutter could be anything that complicates our lives and prevents us from living a purposeful life in harmony and peace. It is experienced at the

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physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Non-stop activity has become our culture by force. We seem to have no time to keep aside for us and reflect upon life. The internet and social media is squeezing out our time even without our knowledge. As life speeds up, we often rush through life; fail to be attentive to life and for most of us, life gets all the more cluttered. Pre-occupation with our 'to do things' affects even our prayer life. In situations such as this, we need to consciously focus on moving from clutter to clarity with lessons from Mary our model and make our lives a celebration.

Let us now look at the life of Mary. In the words of Paul Schmidt, 'Even Mary seemed to have battled with clutter in her life. She would have experienced it during the Annunciation, the nativity and when she lost Child Jesus in the temple. However, she did not get stuck in this clutter. She moved from clutter and chaos posed by life situations to clarity and order. Among several other factors, the most striking one is her realization that she is the handmaid of divine will of salvation; handmaid of divine mercy. This realization enabled her to trust in God and surrender to His will with an unwavering and trusting heart. In the words of St. John Paul II, “the Incarnation of the Word

was bound to Mary's faith.” To be like Mary therefore is to grow deeper and deeper in faith that makes us say: “Lord, Here I am; I am yours; use me as you wish; I trust you.” Isn't the usefulness of our life God's concern? If we can renew this act of surrender at each and every moment of our lives, then each day of ours will be a finished product. Our lives will be clutter free and we will be able to say always: “Let it be done according to thy will.” This is very important because *the life of Jesus in the world today is bound to our faith* as St. John Paul II would put it.

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A second aspect that we can imitate from the life of Mary is her ability to be fully **present** wherever she was and in whatever she did. To be present means to fully inhabit or engage the moment and pay attention to everything around us with ease and without any preoccupations. After the annunciation we meet Mary at the visitation where her mere presence makes even an unborn child leap for joy. The visit to Elizabeth's house also was a God given mission. Mary teaches us that when we are on any mission that is in accordance with the will of God, *our presence will radiate joy* and this joy will bring us and everyone and everything around us closer to God.

The road that Mary had to tread was not a smooth one after her YES to God's will. But she could transcend all the challenges before her. She loved to follow God's law. The clutter in the cattle shed did not block her from paving way for her son to enter the world. Her conviction that she is the handmaid of the divine will of salvation made her surrender to God without any reservation and gave her the courage to combat all the challenges. She let Christ shine; she let Christ be born. That's why we sing to her: "Jesus formed in your faith; Jesus born in your love... Ave Maria!"

### **To be like Mary; to add beauty and joy to the world**

God created this world beautifully and he delights in his creation. As stewards of his creation we cannot fail in our duty to add joy and beauty to this world. When we look around we notice that beauty and goodness are often veiled. 'Do something beautiful for God' was the message our beloved St Mother Teresa used to communicate often. We have ample ways to pay homage to the author of beauty and goodness. We find people who get crushed on the face of difficulties and suffering. In such a context let us see how we can add beauty and joy to the world by being the good news and giving the good news like Mary.

Two images of Mary that would help us in this regard are the proactive Mary at Cana and the caring Mary in the upper room- where the scattered disciples spent their time in prayer with Mary after the death and resurrection of Jesus. At Cana we learn from Mary to add joy to the lives of people through attentiveness. She

owned the situation and this made her identify the shortage of wine at the wedding feast. Rather than pointing out the problem, she found a solution to the problem. Every little attention we pay to our brethren in fact is an act of adding joy and beauty to their lives; a loving gaze, a gentle smile, a simple word of comfort; an affirming presence; a trustful listening. The list is endless. This is all the more needed in a world where we are so engrossed in our work and there is no time to look around. With the advent of mobile phones, even dining tables, which used to be places that nurture fellowship have become a cluster of islands; each one is engaged in their own world. In such a context the mission of attentiveness to the needs of those around assumes much significance.

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Mary's gesture of affirming accompaniment to the disciples who were clueless as to what to do after Christ's death teaches us yet another way to make joy alive in the lives of people. When frustrated, people tend to be directionless. In such moments they need people who can show them the right direction. Mary, who pondered everything in her heart; who believed in God's promises knew that her son's assurance of the 'Helper' will definitely be fulfilled. *When Holy Spirit overshadowed on Mary, birth of Jesus*

happened; when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and the first believers, the Church- body of Christ was born<sup>1</sup>. Let us be like Mary and be with her that she will teach us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be guided by the Holy Spirit who renews everything and makes them beautiful so that we continue building the body of Christ.

### To be like Mary- The Holy Virgin; to be Holy

From the time we can recall, one prayer that most of us keep uttering is "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." Mary's holiness, her spiritual perfection shines like a beacon to all of us as we battle the darkness of the sea and its sudden tempestuous storms to move ever closer to the goal of our life<sup>2</sup>. The call to holiness is universal. In the words of St. John Paul<sup>3</sup> *our times require a serious commitment to holiness. The spiritual needs of the present world are immense! Our true lifelong commitment must be to personal sanctification, so that we may be fit and efficacious instruments of grace.* Pope Francis<sup>4</sup> says that Holiness is to *"Walk in the presence of God without reproach."* Holiness cannot be caught or taught. It cannot be bought or sold. Holiness, Pope Francis says is a journey that we must take into God's presence. No one else can do it in our name. The journey along the path of Holiness is to be nurtured by courage, hope, grace, and conversion.

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**Conclusion:** With the advent of smart technologies, we are getting connected better and the geographical distance between places is decreasing significantly. But this physical closeness is not affected in the world's closeness to God. Therefore we have a great role to play in bringing the world nearer to God. We follow the footsteps of Mary to come out of the clutters of our soul and mind, to add beauty and joy to the world as God's holy people. Let us seek the intercession of Mary by praying along with St. John Paul II<sup>5</sup>

*"O Virgin full of courage, may your spiritual strength and trust in God inspire us, so that we might know how to overcome all the obstacles that we encounter in accomplishing our mission. Teach us to treat the affairs of the world with a real sense of Christian responsibility and joyful hope of coming of God's Kingdom and of a "new Heaven and new earth."*

<sup>1</sup> George Malony, Mary: The Womb of God, Dimension, New Jersey, 1976, 81

<sup>2</sup> George Malony, Mary: The Womb of God, Dimension, New Jersey, 1976, 100

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, The private prayers of John Paul II - Words of inspiration, Pocket books, New York, 1994, 111.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, L'Osservatore Romano, , Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 3 June 2016.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Private prayers - Rosary hour, Atria books, New York, 1993, 162.



# Mary and the Discipleship

J. Joseph, smm

Mary is the Mother of God and to consider her also as a disciple - will that bring down her dignity? Patrick J. Bearsley, S.M., in his conclusion on his study on Mary's discipleship as a paradigm says that using Mary's Discipleship as a paradigm for study doesn't lessen her dignity, rather it enriches our understanding. He says that Mother of God and the Blessed Virgin "are the most jewels in her crown of virtues; her discipleship is the gold which binds them together and the lustre with which they shine."

If we want to consider Mary as a disciple, we need to consider her not as a socio-cultural image or a myth or an archetype, rather as a real person. We cannot but turn to the Scriptures. We know that we cannot get the extensive knowledge of her from the Scripture. Yet, the presentation of Mary by Luke would lead us to deeper knowledge of her. Before we come to understand Mary's Discipleship, let us understand the meaning of discipleship from the Sacred Scripture.

**Discipleship in the Scripture:** When we try to understand discipleship from biblical point of view, we can notice that it lies in God's calling. In this calling of God, there is 'divine initiative and human response'. In this divine calling and human response there is a covenantal relationship. It is the promise of God, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people" that constitutes this covenant. God has called his



people to represent him on the earth, to be with him in every circumstance of life, to be like him in every way. This



'divine calling-human response', we

find in the Old and New Testaments.

**Discipleship in the OT:** The ideal of discipleship in the Old Testament is always seen as the covenant relationship between Israel and God. Although the call comes from God to individuals Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob it was directed toward their offspring (Gen 13:15). God intended to create a community of people. And God instructed his people to be a source of blessing to all the people. (Gen12: 1-3). This relationship was repeatedly confirmed in the event of exodus (Ex 13: 21-22). In this relationship, no other person or God was to take a place of importance and thus demean God. Though God placed men and women in leadership roles (e.g., Moses, Joshua, the judges, prophets), God alone was their leader. The ideal form of discipleship is richly expressed in the prophets. Isaiah expresses the personal nature of this relationship in the prophecies of the new covenant (Is 30:20-21; 31:31-34). When giving the Law to Israel in the wilderness God stressed his covenant intent: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people"(Lev 26:12). The nation was

called to a relationship in which God was with his people.

**Discipleship in the NT:** The theme of God being with his people finds its fulfilment in 'Emmanuel-God', Jesus with his people. The promise of a Messiah is intertwined with the promise that God himself would be with his people. In Jesus, God has come to be with his people, to fulfil the deepest meaning of the covenant God with his people as Master, Lord, and Saviour.

The relationship established between God and Israel was a divine-human relationship that anticipated the relationship to which Jesus would call his followers. To fulfil the covenantal relationship means simply that God must be God, giving him importance in all things. This covenantal relationship finds concrete expression in "following God" and "walking in his ways." The nation fulfils its commitment to the covenant by following God (Deut 4:1-14; 1 Sam 12:14) and walking in his ways (Deut 10: 12-13). Following God is understood in a metaphorical sense of walking in the ways of God.

The Jewish disciples would follow their master around, often literally imitating him. The goal of Jewish disciples was to someday become masters, or rabbis, themselves, and to

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have their own disciples who would follow them. But Jesus' disciples were to remain disciples of their Master and Teacher, Jesus, and to follow him alone. Following Jesus means togetherness with him and service to him while travelling on the Way. The call to be a disciple meant to count the cost of allegiance to Jesus. The Way of following Jesus required for any disciple to count the cost (Mk 8: 34). The disciple must daily deny self, take up the cross, and follow Jesus (Lk 9:23).

**The Goals of Discipleship:** A primary goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus (Lk 6:40). The process of becoming like Jesus brings the disciple into an intimate relationship with the Lord, and this is the goal of individual discipleship. The secondary goal of this discipleship is towards others. It is not self-centred. When the disciples sought the place of prominence, Jesus made them understand that servanthood is the goal of disciples in relationship to one another (Mk 10: 35-45). The goal of discipleship is also oriented towards creating welfare in the world. Through the 'Great Commission' Jesus declares the responsibility of his disciples toward the world: they are to make disciples of all the nations (Mt 28:16-20). To "make disciples" is to proclaim the gospel message among those who have not yet received forgiveness of sins.

Jesus concludes the commission with the crucial element of discipleship: the presence of the Master, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Both those obeying the command and those responding are comforted by the awareness that the risen

Jesus will continue to fashion all his disciples. The Master is always present for his disciples to follow. As disciples become salt and light in this world, walking the narrow path, loving and providing hope to the world, they become living examples for others to follow.

The Lukan perspective of Mary will lead us to reflect Mary's Discipleship better, for the reason that Mary occupies the central place in the Writings of Luke. Mary's Discipleship is to be understood from Annunciation to Pentecost. It is Mary's life journey in its whole that becomes the way of Discipleship. Mary's Discipleship is something that all of us need to see from a faith perspective. First of all let us look at the Annunciation and understand the Discipleship of Mary.

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### **Mary and the Conception of Jesus (1: 26-38)**

In the Lukan narrative, Mary occupies a central place. As Luke presents Jesus from the point of the OT fulfilment, he also accounts her from that perspective. When Luke presents the role of Mary, he places her in different life situations of Jesus as part of God's plan for the world, namely, Mary in the annunciation, the visitation, the birth at Bethlehem, the presentation in the Temple, and the finding of Jesus in the Temple.

When Luke sees Jesus as the fulfilment of the OT, the common patterns in annunciation stories have a purpose. Scholars also try to see the meaning of the question "how" of Mary in (Lk 1:34) from this background. This "how" question is understood as a literary device meant to advance the story and the dialogue. It is an opportunity created for the angel to explain that conception will be virginal. The answer of the angel (Lk 1:35) reveals that Jesus' conception took place at the intervention of the Holy Spirit, and that is why Jesus is the Son of God. Luke and his community's conviction that Jesus was virginally conceived by Mary is brought out here. The words of Mary, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it happen to me according to your word" (1: 38), makes her a perfect disciple and a true member of Jesus' eschatological family. She is also a believer in God's word (1: 38). Mary is a disciple as a listener to the Word of God. The receptivity from the part of Mary is something that every disciple needs to learn.

### **Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth (1: 39-56)**

Mary's obedience as the handmaid of the Lord (1: 38) takes a pragmatic approach. She responds to the word of God in haste, visiting Elizabeth (1: 39-40). The picture of Mary is "she who believed". The meeting of these two women, the occasion of "revelation and of hymnic exaltation", is created by Luke. Mary's greeting brings the Holy Spirit to Elizabeth and she recognises Mary as the Mother of the Lord. Elizabeth praises Mary and Mary in turn praises God (1: 46-55). Elizabeth's words of praise

show that God chose Mary and Mary responded in faith. Luke places Mary at front-stage and centre in this scene. The words of Mary in the form of a Hymn, the Magnificat, placed on the lips of Mary fit the Lukan view of Mary and Jesus.

In the Magnificat, Mary is the lowly handmaid of the Lord who was exalted by a merciful God; the lowly and the hungry of Yahweh (poor of Yahweh) - the downtrodden, the sinners, women, widows, Samaritans etc. (Lk 7: 11-17, 36-50; 10: 29-37; 17: 11-19) are the recipients of Jesus' special love. Mary is presented here as the first Christian disciple and the first one to fulfill the necessary criteria to belong to Jesus' eschatological family (Lk 8: 21). In this hymn Mary proclaims the Gospel in anticipation. Mary is a disciple who proclaims the Good news to the poor and vulnerable. Such attitude is to be learned from every disciple.

### **Mary at the Birth at Bethlehem (2: 1-20)**

After the visitation Mary returns home (1:56). Luke notes here Mary's importance, that was "A virgin betrothed to a man of the house of David whose name was Joseph" (1:27). The information that Luke gives in ch.1 about Mary and ch.2 about the betrothal, it invites for complication. Joseph travelling with his "betrothed", Mary being far advanced in pregnancy shows that Joseph must have fulfilled the second stage of marriage. The words "wife" and "betrothed" employed in the narrative could be contextual as per Matthew and Luke. The words, "Mary kept all these things in her heart" (2: 19, 51) refers to what Luke is trying to say about Mary. "All these things" (2: 19) refer to what the shepherds had said about the angelic

revelation. 2: 51 has to the finding of Jesus in the temple. The emphasis is on what is happening to the child Jesus.

With such background Luke is presenting Mary as the perfect Christian disciple who receives the word of God whole heartedly and makes it fruitful (Lk 8:11-15, 21). Mary is a disciple who bears fruit out of the word that she received. Mary teaches to bear Christ in the world.

### **Mary and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (2: 21-40)**

In this scene of Luke two important aspects are to be noted. One, Mary along with Joseph was obedient to the Law of Moses. Likewise, Luke from the OT background presents Mary as the one who gave birth to the first born and that child was presented in the temple. The Mosaic Law of (Ex 13: 1, 11-16) speaks about the first born male to be set apart. In Luke 2:7 Mary gives birth to the "first born son". 2: 23 of Luke speaks of the OT language of Exodus where it says "a male who opens the womb". Luke gives the details of the offering according to the Law: "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons" (2:24) but he does not say about Num18: 15-16. Accordingly, five shekels had to be paid to buy back the child presented to God in the case of all non-Levites.

In this case, is Luke saying that Jesus is Levite? Keeping aside that argument, we see Luke's intention to present Jesus as the Son of David. (1:32; 3: 23, 31; 18: 38). Two, Luke presents Mary as the ideal Christian disciple who is ready to share Christ's suffering. OT influence on Luke, can be noticed here as well.

The words of Simeon to Mary (2:34-35) have the roots in Ez 14: 17. "A sword passing through" is a symbolic language that Luke adapts to present Mary. Mary is a disciple who knows the suffering and ready to share Christ's suffering. Mary teaches the every disciple to know the suffering and share the suffering.

### **Mary and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple (2: 41-52)**

The Lukan infancy narrative begins with a scene in the temple and ends with another scene in the same temple. The anxious words of Mary: "Son why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have looked..." (2: 48) say that Luke shows Mary as an ideal wife. The answer of Jesus is not so much as a rebuff to the question but Luke sees it as a tone of grief to say that Jesus' parents did not understand him. For Jesus, the eschatological family ties are above the natural family ties. In this scene, Mary tries to rediscover the meaning of the prophetic words of Simeon in 2: 35. She is learning that Jesus places the relationship of his Father above his family ties.

The parents did not understand Jesus' words (2: 50). This theme is present in Luke for his theme on discipleship. In the case of Mary, she treasured all these things in her heart (2: 51). She continued her search for understanding. Luke mean to say that the complete acceptance of the word of God, complete understanding of who Jesus is, and complete discipleship is not yet possible. This will come through the ministry of Jesus and particularly through the cross and resurrection. Luke presents Mary as the disciple who

continues to search for meaning to be the disciple. Mary is a disciple who teaches us to take part in the suffering of her son.

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### **Mary in the Lukan Public Ministry of Jesus**

Luke presents Mary in the Public ministry of Jesus not as a person but as a symbol of discipleship. The theme that we have seen in the infancy narrative, he continues in the Public Ministry. In the life of Jesus as an infant, the role of the mother was more essential. And Luke makes her an appropriate figure in illustrating the discipleship. But during the ministry of Jesus, the twelve take more emphasis. Yet, the continuity of this theme and Mary's role in it can be highlighted.

Lk. 8: 19-21 emphasizes on those who hear the word of God and act on it, are mother and brothers and sisters. Here, Mary is pictured as the one who responded first to the word of God in 1: 38: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word."

In the scene of the beatitude of Jesus' mother (11: 27-28), the woman praises Mary. When it is analysed further, the "womb and breast", speak as a Jewish circumlocution. The beatitude of the mother lies in the Son she produced. So the focus is on the Son and not on



the mother. The beatitude in v. 28 would mean that one should not judge God's blessings by marvellous words or by exorcism (11: 24-26) but by obedient retention of God's word. Elizabeth too praised Mary. In this case, the object of praise is Mary because of the fruit of the womb, Jesus. Yet this happens because of the fulfilment of the things spoken to her by the Lord. In the first case too, the woman praised Mary for the birth of the son.

The Lukan picture of Mary in Lk 11: 28 stresses that Jesus' mother is worthy of beatitude. Her beatitude is not because she gave birth to the child but it is based on the fact that "she heard, believed, obeyed, kept, and pondered the word, and continued to do it (Acts 1: 14)". Luke is presenting here, positively that like all others Mary too fulfilled the criterion of discipleship. Lukan Mary is indeed a model disciple in all the virtues to the Word.

### **Mary in Jerusalem Community of Acts 1: 14**

In this passage, Mary is in the company of the disciples after the resurrection and the ascension. Luke has portrayed Mary as a disciple from the time of Jesus' conception, and 8: 19-21 confirms that she fulfilled the criterion of the members of the eschatological family of Jesus. He does not bring Mary in the rest of accounts of the Acts to show anything further about the discipleship of Mary. Perhaps, he knew little about such details. Luke mentions Jesus' "brothers" in Acts 1: 14, and never in it again. And nothing is said about James, the leader of the Jerusalem community (Acts 12: 17; 15: 13; 21: 18), is a brother of Jesus as mentioned in 1Cor 15: 7 and Gal 1: 19.

Luke begins the Pentecost story in Acts 2: 1. In this scene he shows that Matthias and the eleven being together in the same place, "the upper room", when the sound came from heaven. Since Luke groups women, Mary, and the brothers in the association of eleven in Acts 1:14, he assumes that they were with the twelve. Luke shows Mary as part of the church at Pentecost, engaged in prayer. The important aspect of Luke about Mary is, he gives a "consistent picture of her from the first annunciation of the good news to the eve of the coming of the Spirit who would empower the spread of that good news from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)". Acts 1:14 is to show Mary's response to the word: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord..." Mary is a disciple who became servant of the Word Incarnate.

It is important to note that the Blessed Virgin is loved and venerated merely because she is the Mother of God. It is also hard for us to accept that her holiness merely came from her being the Mother of the saviour.

In Jesus' time, many wished to give His Mother special treatment or honour because of the fact that she was His Mother. Jesus refused to let His mother, his first and most perfect disciple, be reduced to a holy woman by virtue of her biological relationship with Christ. No rather, he pointed out again and again that 'the Mother of God is holy and worthy of veneration and emulation precisely because she "hears the word of God and acts on it". Jesus does not want a biological relationship with us, He wants us to hear the word of God and observe it, to be true disciples, as Mary was and is.

# Mary, Ever Virgin

Erasma B S

In God's plan for our salvation, the only-begotten Son of the Father was also to be the Son of Mary. This is simply a fact of history. In the Incarnation of the Word in her womb, Mary entered into a relationship with the Blessed Trinity that no other human being could have. beside from being the daughter of God the Father by grace, she became, at that moment, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and the Mother of the Son. Thus espoused to and made fruitful by God, she was strictly bound, by His Law, to be faithful to that Divine Spouse. Thus, she must forever remain a virgin.

## 1. Mary Ever Virgin – A brief history

What does Mary mean to us today? The Blessed Virgin Mary has an important place in the life of every Christian. She accompanied Jesus from His conception in her womb until His death on the cross. In doing so she followed Jesus in a perfect manner. Since we as Christians are the followers of Jesus, Mary is able to show us how to follow Jesus. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin Mary's life is a model of Christian discipleship.

We as Catholics firmly believe that Mary is "ever virgin." The *Catechism* asserts, "The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led

the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man" (CCC 499). Given this teaching, the perpetual virginity of Mary has

traditionally been defended and examined in three parts: Mary's conception of Christ (*virginitas ante partum*); her giving birth to Christ (*virginitas in partu*); and her remaining a virgin after the birth of Christ (*virginitas post partum*). This formulation was used by many of the early Church Fathers - St Augustine, St. Peter Chrysologus, Pope St. Leo the Great, St. Gregory Nazianzus, and St.

Gregory Nyssa. For example, the *Catechism* quotes St. Augustine's elaboration: Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to Him, a virgin in carrying Him, a virgin in nursing Him at her breast, always a virgin" (CCC 510).

Mary's virginity prior to the conception of Christ is quite clear from the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke where she is clearly identified as "a virgin" (cf. Luke 1:26-27, Matthew 1:18). Moreover, when Archangel



Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah, she responded, "How can this be since I do not know man?" indicating her virginity.

Officially, the Church has upheld the perpetual virginity of Mary. Pope Siricius in 390 wrote: "This is the virgin who conceived in her womb and as a virgin bore a son". The Council of Chalcedon (451) ratified the teaching of Pope Leo I regarding that Mary is ever-virgin. The Lateran Council (649) (not one of the general councils) stated: "If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly that holy Mary, ever virgin and immaculate, is Mother of God, since in this latter age she conceived in true reality without human seed from the Holy Spirit, God the Word Himself, who before the ages was begotten of God the Father, and gave birth to Him without injury, her virginity remaining equally inviolate after the birth, let him be condemned". In 1555, Pope Paul IV affirmed the virginity of Mary before, during, and after the birth of the Lord. However, the Church has not defined specifically how Mary is virgin in *partu*.

Karl Rahner, without delving into all of the anatomical details, focused on the spiritual reality of Mary's virginity: Mary bore the Son of God. Her childbearing must have been essentially different from other women since she was free of the effects of original sin. Therefore, her virginity, childbearing, and motherhood are together in union with the will of God.

In all, we need to emphasize and revere both the virginity and motherhood of Mary. The *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* of Vatican

II asserted that Christ's birth "did not diminish His mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it" (LG. 57). Accordingly, "in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother"(LG 63).

**Mary bore the Son of God. Her childbearing must have been essentially different from other women since she was free of the effects of original sin. Therefore, her virginity, childbearing, and motherhood are together in union with the will of God.**

## 2. Perpetual Virginity- A Dogma

The expression perpetual virginity, ever-virgin, or simply "Mary the Virgin" refers primarily to the conception and birth of Jesus. From the first formulations of faith, especially in baptismal formulas or professions of faith, the Church professed that Jesus Christ was conceived without human seed by the power of the Holy Spirit only. Here lies the decisive meaning of expressions such as "conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary," "Mary's virginal conception," or "virgin birth." The early baptismal formula (since the 3rd century) state Mary's virginity without further explaining it, but there is no doubt about its physical meaning. Later statements are more explicit. Mary conceived "without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth" (Council of the Lateran, 649).

Although never explicated in detail, the Catholic Church holds as dogma that Mary was

and is Virgin before, in and after Christ's birth. It stresses thus the radical novelty of the Incarnation and Mary's no less radical and exclusive dedication to her mission as mother of her Son, Jesus Christ. Vatican II reiterated the teaching about Mary, the Ever-Virgin, by stating that Christ's birth did not diminish Mary's virginal integrity but sanctified it. The Catechism of the Catholic Church ponders the deeper meaning of the virgin bride and perpetual virginity (499-507). It also maintains that Jesus Christ was Mary's only child. The so-called "brothers and sisters" are close relations.

There are four Marian dogmas stating Mary's personal relationship with God and her role in human salvation. (1. Divine Motherhood 2. Perpetual Virginity 3. Immaculate Conception 4. The Assumption). The dogma that Mary is perpetually a virgin was defined at the Second Council of Constantinople in the sixth century. This idea is found in the third canon of the first Lateran Council under Pope Martin I in 649. The essential words of the dogma are "The holy, ever virginal and Immaculate Mary is Mother of God, since in recent days she really and truly conceived, without seed, by the Holy Ghost, the same Divine Word who was born before all time and gave birth to him in chastity, her virginity remaining unimpaired after the birth". Paul IV, in the Bull *Cum quorum dam* asserted that Mary was a virgin "before birth, in birth and perpetually after the birth" of Jesus.

The Church declared that Mary conceived Jesus only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The virginal conception of Jesus is clearly evident in the Scriptures. The Evangelist Matthew records

the virginal conception in the first chapter of his Gospel (cf. Mt1:18, 25). Luke also points out Mary's virginity in the moment of the conception. In Lk 1:27, Mary is twice called a virgin. At the Annunciation scene, Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Lk 1: 34). Mary's astonishment at the message of the angel indicates her state as a virgin. Mary is called Joseph's betrothed although she was with child (Lk 2:4). Joseph is not called Jesus' father until the child Jesus was born. Joseph's physical parenthood is not mentioned in the ceremony of circumcision and naming of Jesus (Lk 2:21). The virginal conception of Jesus is the fulfillment of promise of God through the prophet Isaiah. "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Is 7:14).

Some argue that Mary had other children after the birth of Jesus. The reason behind this argument is Scripture references about the siblings of Jesus (Mk 3:20-21; 31- 35, 6:3, Mt 12:46, Lk 8:19, Jn 2:12, 7:3-5). The Greek word *adelphos* is used in Scripture to refer to Jesus' brothers. But this word has a broader meaning. It is occasionally equivalent to a relative with whom there was no blood relationship (cf. Rom

**"The holy, ever virginal and Immaculate Mary is Mother of God, since in recent days she really and truly conceived, without seed, by the Holy Ghost, the same Divine Word who was born before all time and gave birth to him in chastity, her virginity remaining unimpaired after the birth".**

9:3). Origin suggested that Jesus' brothers were children of Joseph from another woman. St. Ambrose argued that the Johannine account of Jesus entrusting Mary to John at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:27) indicates that Mary had no other children. The brothers of Jesus in the Scripture could have been Jesus' close relatives, foster siblings or members of the same tribe. Anyone of Jesus' brothers is said to be the sons of Mary of Nazareth.

The Church teaches firmly that Mary is "ever-virgin". Although Mary gave birth to her son, it did not affect her virginity. The Second Vatican Council states: "The birth of our Lord did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it" (LG 57). In the liturgy, the Church celebrates Mary as a perpetual virgin. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "Mary remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St Augustine, Sermon 186, 1:PL 38, 999, CCC 510).

The mystery of the perpetual virginity of Mary continues in the Church. Mary's virginity is praised in the Church's prayers. On the feast of her holy name, the Church praises her in the Breviary with the words: "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary: for thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the entire world!" St. Augustine teaches that the Church is a virgin in her faith. All Christians are called to be virgins according to the faith. By the power of grace in Baptism, Christians have the responsibility to keep their true faith without any stain or error. At the same time, a smaller number of people in the Church are chosen to

keep physical virginity in their body. The same Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary, gives grace to these people to live a life of consecrated virginity. They follow Mary in her perpetual virginity and accept her as a model to give witness to God in this world.

### 3. Mary Ever Virgin – A Symbol of realization of the Eschatological Family

Here we consider and try to understand what is implied by the virginity of Mary for our study of Mary as the symbol of realization of the eschatological family without going into the details of the dogmatic issues. Certainly the virginity of Mary has to be understood only in the context of her being the Mother of Jesus who was the Incarnate Son of God. Virginity needs to be understood at three levels: a) Physical sphere – the bodily integrity of a person who has had no sexual gratification. b) Moral sphere – abstention from the sexual gratification in mind. c) Spiritual sphere – total self-giving to God. It is undisputable to say that Mary is virgin at all the three levels based on the Scriptural texts, traditional faith experiences of the believers and logical theological explanations given by various fathers of the Church and theologians. Her virginity is part of the mysterious redemptive plan of God for humanity. And so, Mary's virginity represents the eschatological virginity which Jesus expresses it in his own way when he says, "At the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like angels in heaven" (Mt 22: 30; Mk 12: 25; cf. Lk 20: 34-36). The limitless love of God, of neighbour and of self in the next life is in its direct vision called virginal and the



attainment of this eschatological virginity is regarded as a desirable goal for all which Mary has attained in her life time on the earth through her life commitment.

Mary has been redeemed fully because of her total virginal commitment to God in carrying out His plan of salvation for all. Fully redeemed people are the members of the Eschatological family and Mary is the first one to belong to that family. Jesus recommends virginity to those who are capable of it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19: 10ff; Lk 18:29ff). There are various textual passages which recommend virginity for the better way of commitment to the kingdom of God without underestimating or devaluing the sacred marriage. For Both the voluntarily and involuntarily unmarried as well as the married are all equally oriented, each in one's own way, to eschatological virginity which, though not yet finally realized, yet is already realized to the extent that they are chaste, each according to his or her own situation. Mary's virginity though designed and destined by God but left to her free choice she accepted it voluntarily to be one for the sake of the kingdom of God.

#### 4. Mary Ever Virgin – A Total Communion and Self-Giving to God

Virginity or chastity cannot be restricted

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only to bodily integrity, but should be understood from the holistic point of view. Jesus speaks of moral chastity which includes absence of sexual gratification in the mind (Mt 5, 27). The Church teaches the married couples to live a chaste life: "Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity" (CCC 2350). Mary's virginity must be placed at the spiritual realm consisting in total communion and self-giving to God. Being in total communion with God (Lk 1:26-38), she makes the most prudent decision through her '*fiat*' (*Virgin most prudent*). Mary's closeness to God was the source of her personal power and strength (*Virgin most powerful*), and this strength made her to perform the renowned act of Charity (*Virgin most renowned*) toward her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1: 39 -45). By being faithful to God (*Virgin most faithful*) she had the courage to sing the '*Magnificat*': "From now on all the generations will call me blessed" (*Virgin most venerable*). The title '*Virgin most merciful*' is the reflection of God's mercy. The angelic salutation, 'favored one' (originally in Greek '*Kecharit mén*' which means 'full of grace' or 'having the fullness of grace') shows that God's love and eternal mercy has truly enveloped her from the very beginning.

Mary's virginity is a sign of her single mindedness and total adherence to God. It is the source of receiving strength from God in

order to be of service to other. It is also symbolic of her continued and faithful discipleship. Karl Rahner says, "Throughout her life, from conception to death, her whole existence was absorbed into the function of being the mother of The Lord which is being disciple of the Lord". Mary's Virginity must be placed within the wider context of Mary's vocation, centered totally on Jesus Christ and of the biblical understanding of virginity as total dependence and faithful adherence to the word of God. Mary's virginity gives meaning to the vocation of every human being, especially those in religious lives, who are called to center their life on Jesus and reach out to others in service for the establishment of Kingdom of God.

### Conclusion

Mary, ever Virgin is the exemplar of consecrated people who give witness to Christ keeping the evangelical counsels, poverty, chastity and obedience. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the perfect contemplative and was attentive to the needs of the others. We have seen this in her visitation to Elizabeth (Lk 1: 39-45) and at the Cana event (Jn 2:1-11). Following

the example of Mary, consecrated people work for the Kingdom of God through their prayer and different apostolic activities.

As Christians, we are called to imitate the integrity of Mary in heart and mind and thus to surrender to God developing obedience and faith like hers. Like Mary, we must follow Jesus even in the darkest moments of our lives. Then God will give us the Crown of Glory in the life after death. Mary ever Virgin received the gift from the Holy Spirit to bear witness to God's graceful love. We are also called to give birth to Jesus in our daily lives by bearing witness to him. Mary, Mother of Jesus is our mother on whom we can focus our hearts to find the ways to follow Jesus in a perfect way. She is our model. She is the model of perfect Christian discipleship.

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### JOKES

Lover: Suppose if I die during this operation; darling you should marry this doctor, can you do this for me?

Girl: Why are you talking like this!!

Lover: Then how to take revenge on him

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Wife: Doctor recommends me to go to the hill station to have a good rest, so where shall we go darling?

Husband: We shall go to another doctor.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Mary's Glorious Assumption

Aswani Kumar smm

It is fitting that Mary who cooperated with God's plan for our salvation by saying yes to God and giving birth to Jesus would be honored at the end of her life by no decay touching her body. But it was not just a reward granted to her by God for giving birth to Jesus and rearing him; decay could not touch Mary's body because she did not sin. In Romans, 6:23 Paul says the "the wages of sin is death." Because Mary was immaculate, and never sinned, it is only natural and logical that she would not suffer the consequences of sin, that decay would not touch her body. Instead she was assumed body and soul to the glory of heaven. When Jesus ascended into heaven there were many witnesses. Although no one witnessed Mary being assumed into heaven and it is not stated in the Scriptures, it has been the constant belief of the Church since the first century. When Pope Pius XII officially proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption in 1950 he did not clarify whether or not Mary died. He stated that at the end of her life she was assumed body and soul to the glory of heaven. However according to tradition she died but her body disappeared from her tomb because she was assumed into heaven.

While most scholars follow this reasoning of St. Alphonsus, there are some who feel that the "*dormitio*" or "falling asleep of the Virgin" meant that she was preserved by her son from actual death. It is interesting to note that when Pope Pius XII defined the doctrine of the

Assumption on Nov 1, 1950, he defined that she was taken body and soul into heaven, but he carefully omitted reference to her death. This is still an open question.



Mary's assumption into heaven reminds us that the next life is only a wave of the hand away from this life, that there is only a veil between this life and the next. St. Paul opines that (2 Cor 15:20-26) all being brought to life in Christ in their proper order. It is fitting that Mary was the first to be brought to life in Christ sharing the glory of his resurrection being assumed body and soul to heaven. It is a reminder to us of the glory that awaits each of us since we are all sons and daughters of God since our baptism. In his first letter John wrote, "My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is." (1 John 3:2) Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

**It is fitting that Mary was the first to be brought to life in Christ sharing the glory of his resurrection being assumed body and soul to heaven. It is a reminder to us of the glory that awaits each of us since we are all sons and daughters of God since our baptism.**

St John Paul II in 1997 said it is legitimate to think that Mary is the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his Resurrection. He suggested that the silence of the evangelists concerning an apparition of the risen Jesus to Mary must not lead to the conclusion that no such apparition took place. St John Paul suggested that perhaps the evangelists omitted it because it might be considered biased. I would like to suggest that such an apparition simply could not be described in words and if well known was not necessary in the Gospels. In one of his letters (1 Cor 15:6) St. Paul mentions appearances of the risen Jesus to many others not recorded in the Gospels so the Gospels do not record all the appearances of the risen Jesus. The reason why Mary did not accompany the women to the tomb early on Easter Sunday morning is probably because she had already seen Jesus risen. Even though the Assumption of Our Lady is not explicitly in the Bible it has been believed by the Church for centuries. Today we thank God for the Assumption of Our Lady. It is, as the Preface says, "a sign of hope and comfort" for God's people on their pilgrim way.

Mary's Assumption into heaven, having completed her life while remaining sinless, reminds us, as St John Paul II said, that the goal of the Church is heaven. We pray that one day the whole Church may be in heaven pure and holy like Mary in heaven.

"In the Most Holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle" (*Redemptoris Mater*: 47).

Let it be enough to think of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Church of Our Lady of Assumption at Assergi, near L' Aquila. There recent restorations have brought to light again a painting on the Assumption of the same inspiration, though defaced by subsequent modernizations of the sacred building. The death phase is always included in the models indicated. And this indication has its value. It denotes that the death of the Virgin though it is a datum excluded from the dogmatic definition of 1950, always remains the historical antecedent of the Assumption. Any underestimation, even if only of historical significance, would offend the traditional sense of the faithful, Western and above all, Eastern. The two Basilicas of Jerusalem, that of Mount Zion dedicated to the Dormition and the other in Gethsemane, dedicated to the Burial and Assumption, both of great antiquity, make any doubt inadmissible for the Eastern – as seen in the Alexandrine rite there is an interval of 206 days between the death and the resurrection - assumption, the two events having been celebrated since the 5<sup>th</sup> century on different dates, 29<sup>th</sup> January and 22 August.

In Collemaggio, the scene of the coronation of Our Lady of Assumption takes place simply. It is Jesus himself who puts the royal crown on his Mother's head. He is wearing the dark garment, with a white mantle edged with red. She, the divine Mother, is dressed in red, with a green veil and dark mantle. A gilt cloth forms the background for the two persons, whose heads are crowned with pearl-studded haloes, which also have a gilt background.

In the lower scene emphasis is on the empty tomb surrounded by the Apostles. These are all in positions of surprise, and the variety of their expression is admirable. One seems meditative, another ecstatic, some are consulting one another, some are peering into the paths of heaven, some are just sad. They themselves, the Apostles, had laid the body of the Blessed Virgin in the tomb. And now, having returned to the spot to check, they do not find it there! Could the enemies of the Gospel have harmed it and dispersed it?

It is at this point that the Apostle Thomas comes in, to play a reassuring role. In the group he appears on the left side, in a higher position, with his eyes and his hands raised towards the Virgin. He is in the act of receiving a belt which descends from heaven. The particulars, so numerous in his attitude, can appear in their full light only from comparison with the original Oriental texts. As examples it will be sufficient to mention two Egyptian documents, one Iconographic, the other literary.

In this connection, an image preserved in the archives of the Copt museum in old Cairo, is very eloquent. It goes back to the year 1403: sheet 139, 20 x 30 cm. in dimension. It consists of four elements, two in the lower part and two in the upper part. In the lower part, on the left, the empty tomb, on the right the group of the Apostles gathered near the Virgin's tomb: there are 11 of them, Thomas being absent. In this first section, it is not unlikely that the painter had made the drawing after visiting the shrine that rises on Mary's tomb in the large Basilica of Gethsemane. The similarity between the

drawing and the shrine, as it still appears today and as it is presented by the most ancient sources suggests this.

### Heavenly Path:

In the second section above, the figure of Our Lady of the Assumption stands out, on the left. She is surrounded by four angels, two at her shoulders and two at her feet, all flying and supporting her and taking her towards paradise. A fifth angel, with wings and arms outspread, hovers higher up, as guide of their heavenly path. On the right, still in the upper part, the Apostle Thomas is arriving. He too is flying, borne by a cloud. The Arab inscription, partly on his head and partly under his feet, points out the marvelous aspect: "Thomas on the cloud". Meeting the group of the angels and Our Lady of the Assumption in the heavenly sphere, he is astonished, asks for information and obtains as a keepsake the Virgin's belt.

The last episode, Thomas and the belt, finds clarifications in the literary trimmings of the Alexandrine synaxarion, which draws in turn upon the ancient *Liber transitus*. While the Apostle was carrying out his apostolate in India, he was miraculously transported by a white cloud to Jerusalem, where the other apostles had arrived in the same way. The death of the Lord's Mother had brought them back to the holy city. Thomas, however, was late. At this arrival, Mary was already dead, risen again and taken up into heaven. He had met her, in fact along the ways of heaven, together with the angels. He had recognized her, venerated her, had asked her for a keepsake, and had obtained from her the belt that clasped her clothes.



On his arrival at Jerusalem, he pretended to know nothing. When his fellow disciples informed him of the Virgin's death, he pretends disbelief. "I am Thomas", he said, "If I don't see I don't believe". The verification was to take place at Gethsemane, the place of the burial. But there, unfortunately, it was the other apostles who were confused. "They found the tomb empty, without the body of Mary, the Mother of Jesus". Then it fell to Thomas to take an active part and cheer-up those around him. He spoke of the resurrection and the assumption of the Virgin and reassured everyone. He himself had met her, and he had her belt as proof of the meeting. The Apostles observed it, and recognized that it was just the belt that they themselves had put on the divine Mother after her death to keep her clothes in order.

Thomas in the city of Calro, then called Babylon, he built a Church, leaving the belt of Our Lady of the Assumption there as a relic. Hence comes the title of "Christians of the belt", recalled to frequently by mediaeval travelers who passed through Cairo, coming from the West. (Gabriele Giamberardini O. R. August 12, 1976).

In heaven Mary as Mother of the Church cares for us here on earth, helping us to become more like her son Jesus. St John Paul II, quoting Pope Paul VI, stated.

"We believe that the Most Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, the Mother of the Church,

carries on in heaven her maternal role with regard to the members of Christ, cooperating in the birth and development of divine life in the souls of the redeemed."

A way for us to surrender ourselves to God and be filled with the presence of God like Mary is to pray the Rosary daily. It is a most beautiful prayer, a prayer that can bring us closer to God and keep us closer to God. When we pray the Rosary we are not just saying prayers. Saying the prayers is to calm us down so that we can tune in to God and our blessed Mother. While we say the prayers our minds are meditating on the fifteen great events in the life of Jesus. When we are in desperation and we don't know how to pray, it is a good prayer and is a most beautiful way to keep in contact with our heavenly mother. When we do so we can unite ourselves with Mary in expressing her sentiments:

**We believe that the Most Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, the Mother of the Church, carries on in heaven her maternal role with regard to the members of Christ, cooperating in the birth and development of divine life in the souls of the redeemed.**

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid" (Luke 1:46-48).

# Apparitions

## Michael Menezes, smm

Cardinal Bona distinguishes between visions and apparitions. There is an apparition when we do not know that the figure which we see relates to a real being, a vision when we connect it with a real being. With most mystics we consider these terms as synonymous. St. Paul, rapt to the third heaven, was instructed in mysteries which it is not in the power of the soul to relate (2 Cor 12:4). This article will deal not with natural but with supernatural visions, that is, visions due to the direct intervention of a power superior to man.

### What is an apparition?

An apparition, from the Latin word '*apparere*' (to appear), is in a literal sense merely an appearance - a sense perception of any kind, but as used in psychical research and parapsychology the word denotes an abnormal or paranormal appearance or perception, which cannot be explained by any mundane objective cause. Taken in this sense the word covers all visionary appearances, hallucinations, clairvoyance, and similar unusual perceptions. All apparitions do not take the form of visual images.

### Ancient and Modern Ideas Concerning Apparitions

In the ancient Middle East, the belief in apparitions was very common. The early Hebrews attributed them to angels, demons, and the souls of the dead, as is shown in the numerous Scriptural instances of apparitions.

Dreams (see, for example Genesis 41) were regarded as an apparition if the predictions made in them were fulfilled, or if the dream-figure revealed anything unknown to the dreamer



which afterwards proved to be true. That the Hebrews believed in the possibility of the souls of the dead returning is evident from the tale of the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28). In this connection, the French biblical scholar Augustin Calmet wrote in his classic study, 'Dissertations upon the Apparitions of Angels, Demons & Ghosts' (1759), "Whether Samuel was raised up or not, whether his soul, or only a shadow, or even nothing at all appeared to the woman, it is still certain that Saul and his attendants, with the generality of the Hebrews, believed the thing to be possible." Similar beliefs were held by other Mediterranean nations. Among the Greeks and Romans of the classic period apparitions of gods and men seem to have been fairly common.

In the early centuries of Christendom there was no diminution in the number of apparitions witnessed. Visions of saints were frequently seen; their appearances were stimulated by the fasts, rigid austerities, and severe penances practiced by Christian ascetics and penitents. The saints regularly saw visions, and were attended by guardian angels, as well as being harassed by the

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unwelcome attention of demons, or of their master, the devil.

### **Apparitions of the Virgin Mary**

One characteristic type of apparition is the appearance of the Virgin Mary, who is usually seen by young girls/boys in Catholic countries. Such appearances involve messages for humankind as a whole, usually admonitions against sin and exhortations to repentance. The apparitions are not sought by the children and youth concerned, and often the messages are well beyond their intellectual capacity. The visions occur in an ecstatic state.

Typical of such apparitions were those at Lourdes, in southern France, Fatima in Portugal, and Garabandal in Spain. Such apparitions have reinforced the faith of thousands of Catholics, though many have pointed out that similar visitations have been recorded widely within non-Catholic Christianity and among most or all of the world's religions and peoples. It is natural that sincere devotees envision a divine figure in the form familiar through the iconography of their own religion.

### **Universality of Belief in Apparitions**

While the beliefs in ancient and medieval

times may arouse interest and curiosity for their own sakes, psychological researchers have valued them chiefly as throwing light on modern occurrences and beliefs. The belief in apparitions, for example, has been a root principle of Spiritualism and is characteristic of religions that postulate the existence of the human soul. Many individuals who are not Spiritualists in the accepted sense have had experiences that render belief in apparitions inevitable.

### **The Genesis of Apparitions**

A Marian apparition is a reported supernatural appearance by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The figure is often named after the town where it is reported, or on the sobriquet given to Mary on the occasion of the apparition.

Marian apparitions sometimes are reported to recur at the same site over an extended period of time. In the majority of Marian apparitions only one person or a few people report having witnessed the apparition. Exceptions to this include Zeitoun, Fátima, and Assiut where thousands claimed to have seen her over a period of time.

Some Marian apparitions and their respective global icons have received a Canonical coronation from the Pope, most notably Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fátima, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Our Lady of Manaoag, Our Lady of the Pillar, Our Lady of Walsingham, and many others.

**Canonically approved apparitions****1. Approved by the Roman Catholic Church****1.1 Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531)**

Mary appeared four times to Juan Diego in 1531 at Tepeyac hill near Mexico City. She proclaimed herself the spiritual mother of all humankind and left her miraculous image on Juan Diego's outer garment, his tilma. To this day Mexicans have a great devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

**1.2 Our lady of Lezajsk, Poland (1578)**

In 1578, a God-fearing woodcutter named Thomas Michalek saw "Mary and Joseph" in a resplendent light. The Virgin told him: Thomas, I chose this place myself; here, my Son will be honored, and whoever will invoke me will benefit from my intercession. She asked Thomas to go see his bishop and request the construction of a church.

However, Thomas was too afraid to speak to his bishop. The Virgin appeared to him again, but he still didn't go. So she came to him a third time "In a great light," scolding him for not obeying her. Finally, Thomas alerted the village.

At first the townspeople didn't believe him. His priest denounced him and he had to answer before the judge. In a strange twist of events, that priest died shortly afterwards, and his successor agreed to build a small chapel to the Virgin.

In 1606, the bishop, Msgr Potrokonski, pledged to build a larger shrine with the

support of the Polish King Sigismund III. His successor, Msgr Henry Firliz, confirmed the authenticity of the apparition. Emeritus Pope Benedict XIV had the image of the Virgin crowned on September 8, 1752, by Msgr W. Sierakowski, and he himself blessed the crown.

**1.3 Our Lady of Šiluva, Lithuania (1608)**

Our Lady of Šiluva is a Roman Catholic icon of the Virgin Mary in Šiluva, Lithuania. A cathedral of the same name has been built and is dedicated to it. The icon is highly venerated in Lithuania and is often called "Lithuania's greatest treasure". Šiluva is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Lithuania with its ancient tradition of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, popularly called "Šilin s".

The Marian devotion at Šiluva goes back almost to the beginning of Christianity in Lithuania. The Grand Duke Jogaila was baptized Catholic in 1387 when he married the Queen of neighboring Poland. Later he and his successors worked to spread the Christian faith in their territory, which until then was pagan. They established the ecclesiastical hierarchy, built churches and even personally taught catechism to their subjects.

**1.4 Our Lady of Laus (1664–1718)**

Benoite was born in September 16, 1647, into extreme poverty in the village of St Etienne d'Avancon. Her father died when

she was only seven. By the time Benoite was twelve, she took employment tending sheep. In May 1664, the seventeen-year-old Benoite saw an apparition of St. Maurice, a 3rd-century martyr who was greatly honored at Laus. This was near a nearby chapel, then in ruins, dedicated to St. Maurice. He warned her that if she remained in that area, the local guards would take her flock if they found it there. St. Maurice told the shepherdess to go to the Valley of Kilns, above Saint-Étienne, where she would see the Mother of God. On May 16 Benoite took her sheep to the Valley of Kilns. She came to a grotto, when Mary, holding the child Jesus in her arms, appeared to her. Her offer to share the hard bread she had made the beautiful lady smile, but she left without saying a word. For a period of about 4 months, the Lady came back every day, and Benoite heard her speak. Others could not hear what Mary said. On August 29, the Lady told Benoite that her name is Mary.

The Lady instructed Benoite to go to Laus from her own village nearby and to look for her there "where you will smell a very nice perfume". Benoite made her way to Laus and found an old Chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de Bon Rencontre and while the smell of the beautiful perfume was there, the Chapel was in a bad condition. "It is my desire that a new chapel be built here in honour of my beloved Son. It will become a place of conversion for numerous sinners and I shall appear here very often" said the beautiful lady. She told

Benoite that the oil from the sanctuary lamp would work miracles with the infirm if they received the anointing with faith in her intercession.

#### 1.5 Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (1830)

Mary appeared to Catherine Labouré, in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, at Rue du Bac in Paris, three times in 1830. She showed her the design of the medal of the Immaculate Conception, the "Miraculous Medal." This medal, when propagated, helped to renew devotion to Our Lady, both in France and eventually around the world.

#### 1.6 Our Lady of La Salette (1846)

Mary appeared to two children, Maximin Giraud, aged 11 and Mélanie Calvat, aged 14, in 1846, one afternoon while they were looking after the animals high up on the mountain. She appealed for penance and an end to Sabbath breaking and blasphemy in the region. This apparition is credited with a major revival of Catholicism in the area.

#### 1.7 Our Lady of Lourdes (1858)

Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, aged 14, a total of eighteen times at Lourdes in southern France, at the Grotto of Massabielle. She asked for penance and prayer for the conversion of sinners, and described herself as the "the Immaculate Conception." Lourdes is most famous for the miraculous spring which

has been responsible for many cures accepted by the Church.

#### 1.8 Our Lady of Champion, Wisconsin (1859)

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, also dedicated as the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, is a Marian shrine, located within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Green Bay. The chapel is in the community of Champion, Wisconsin, about 16 miles (26 km) north east of Green Bay, Wisconsin. It stands on the site of the reported Marian apparition to a Belgian-born woman, Adele Brise, in the year 1859.

Adele Brise was born in Belgium in 1831. Together with her parents, she immigrated to Wisconsin in 1855. In early October 1859, Adele reported seeing a woman clothed in white and standing between two trees, a hemlock and a maple. Adele described the woman as surrounded by a bright light, clothed in dazzling white with a yellow sash around her waist and a crown of stars above her flowing blond locks.[3] She was frightened by the vision and prayed until it disappeared. When she told her parents what she had seen, they suggested that a poor soul might be in need of prayers.

The following Sunday, which was October 9, 1859, she saw the apparition a second time while walking to Mass in the community of Bay Settlement. Her sister and another woman were with her at the

time but neither of them saw anything. She asked the parish priest for advice, and he told her that if she saw the apparition again, she should ask it, "In the Name of God, who are you and what do you wish of me?"

Returning from Mass that same day, she saw the apparition a third time, and this time asked the question she was given. The lady replied, "I am the Queen of Heaven, who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same." Adele Brise was also given a mission to "gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation."

At the time of the apparition Adele was 28 years old, and she devoted the rest of her life to teaching children. At first she traveled by foot from house to house, and later she began a small school. Some other women joined her in this work and they formed a community of sisters according to the rule of the Third Order Franciscans, although Adele Brise never took public vows as a nun. She died on July 5, 1896.

The apparition was formally approved on December 8, 2010, by Bishop David Ricken, becoming the first Marian apparition approved by the Catholic Church in the United States. Bishop Ricken also approved the Chapel as a Diocesan Shrine, recognizing its long history as a place of pilgrimage and prayer.

### 1.9 Our Lady of Pontmain (1871)

Mary appeared in the sky over the small town of Pontmain in north-western France to a group of young children for about three hours in January 1871, as the Franco-Prussian war was threatening the area. Her message appeared on a banner under her feet, and encouraged prayer while emphasising Jesus' love and concern. The village was spared invasion.

### 1.10 Our Lady of Gietrzwałd, Poland (1877)

Gietrzwałd is a village in northeastern Poland located in Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, near Olsztyn. In the year 1877, according to the Catholics, the Virgin Mary was revealed to two people, little girls Barbara Samulowska and Justyne Szafrska. She appeared several times, speaking the Polish language (as opposed to German; Since in East Prussia German was the main language and there was Polish minority), and explained how important it is to pray and say the rosary. Since then, pilgrims from Poland and other countries have been coming to Gietrzwałd to see the picture of the Virgin Mary and a spring with claimed miraculous powers. The Catholic Church acknowledged the Vision of the Mother of Christ as real in 1977. The town is now an official pilgrim area.

### 1.11 Our Lady of Knock (1879)

Mary appeared at Knock, a small village in County Mayo, Ireland in August 1879. A

number of villagers of diverse ages saw a silent apparition, which lasted about three hours, outside the gable end of the local church. They saw three figures, Mary, Joseph, and St John the Apostle, as well as a lamb on an altar and angels.

### 1.12 Our Lady of Fátima (1917)

Three children, Lucia de Santos, aged 10, and her two cousins, Francisco Marto, aged 9, and Jacinta Marto, aged 7, saw Mary six times between May and October 1917. She described herself as "Our Lady of the Rosary," while urging prayer, and particularly the rosary, as well as penance for the conversion of sinners, and the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

### 1.13 Our Lady of Beauraing (1932–1933)

Mary appeared thirty-three times to a group of children in the winter of 1932-33 at Beauraing in Belgium, in a convent garden near a hawthorn tree. She described herself as "the Immaculate Virgin" and "Mother of God, Queen of Heaven," while calling for prayer for the conversion of sinners.

### 1.14 Our Lady of Banneux (1933)

Mary appeared eight times to Mariette Beco, aged 11, outside the family home at Banneux, a small village, in Belgium. She described herself as the "Virgin of the Poor," and promised to intercede for the poor, the sick and the suffering.

### 1.15 Our Lady of Kibeho, Rwanda (1981)

Our Lady of Kibeho is the name given to Marian apparitions concerning several adolescents, in the 1980s in Kibeho, south-western Rwanda. The apparitions communicated various messages to the schoolchildren, including an apocalyptic vision of Rwanda descending into violence and hatred, possibly foretelling the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

All the Marian apparitions which have taken place are a call to each one of us to

introspect our own lives how we live the call that is given to us and our consecration to Jesus through Mary. (Lev. 20:7) "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am, your God is Holy". As Jesus Himself has said in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near repent and believe in the good news." Yes we are called to be the people of the Kingdom with holiness and faith in the Divine Providence and trusting in the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May we be inspired to experience the Incarnate Wisdom in our lives.

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**Maria Bhavan, Bangalore - 560 029)**



# **Spirituality of Service according to Mary and St. Mother Teresa**

**Selva Kumar smm**

Mother Teresa was a popular nun in India and the world as well because of her spirituality of service and prayer and since her death she became a legend to the whole universe. She is known and loved all over the world for her compassion and service to the poorest of the poor. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was one of the most respected and loved women in the world. In a world driven by the division of territory, politics, ideology, religion, gender, terrorism, abject poverty, injustice and oppression, Mother Teresa became the ultimate symbol of harmony.

She is the founder of Missionaries of Charity known as 'The living Saint, 'Angel of Calcutta,' 'Champion of the Poor,' 'Voice of compassion' and 'Saint of the Gutters' etc. A person totally dedicated to uplift of the abandoned, orphans and derelicts of society. The service of Mother Teresa was for whole humanity including men and women, irrespective of caste, religion and class etc. As we celebrate the second year of Canonization of this great Saint on September 4<sup>th</sup>, it is an appropriate time to recall all her dedication, commitment and service that she along with her sisters undertook for humanity giving a new meaning to the term 'Service' in her life.

I present this article in the light of Mary's visitation and her service to her cousin Elizabeth. Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997. On October 19, 2003, St. John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Within few

years of her death she was declared a Saint by Pope Francis on Sunday at a Canonisation ceremony held in the Vatican City, Rome. The Canonization on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2016 came on the eve of her 19th death anniversary. She is now known as St. Teresa of Calcutta. This historical event was witnessed in Vatican City by a 12-member central delegation by the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and two state government-level delegations from Delhi and West Bengal, led by their Chief Ministers Arvind Kejriwal and Mamata Banerjee. The ceremony was an amazing moment for our country and to the whole world.

1. Call with in a Call: Her life journey provides us a broader understanding of the term service. St. Teresa was a tireless worker. While she was teaching in Loreto Convent School, an awakening within her religious life took place. Her superior sent her to Darjeeling for a spiritual retreat so that she would have a period of renewal and physical break from her daily routine way of life. It was on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1946 during her train journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling she received an inspiration which she later described as "Call with in a Call." She clearly heard God's voice speaking with in her. "You must leave the convent to help the poor by living among them." Throughout her retreat St. Teresa prayed over and pondered God's message.

2. Spirituality of Service: In the Old Testament

the Jews called themselves servants of God and they were in turn called upon to serve others. In the OT many different people were called as "Servants of God" like the Prophets, Kings, Shepherds etc. However there are very few who have been called as 'My Servant' in divine speech itself. God called Abraham as My Servant (Gen 26: 24) who became the source of blessing for others. Moses who was also the mediator of the covenant is also called as 'My Servant.' The New Testament concept of spirituality of service is based on the imitation of Christ. A Christian pattern of life is derived from the love of God within and takes expression in selfless acts of service. In mirroring the acts of Jesus Christ, one who is brought into closer harmony with His motives and aspirations and Christ's work in the world is accomplished through our works. We are reminded by Jesus' own words that "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10: 45) as well as by the words of St. Paul that Jesus Christ, "He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2: 6-7). Jesus modelled service before his disciples and called them to similar deeds. "So if then your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13: 14- 15).

The meaning of the word 'Service' according to the New Standard Dictionary is "Labour performed in the interest and the direction of others. It is work exercised by a slave, hired man, and he is an employee. It has two meanings. Firstly any work done for the benefit of another. Secondly in a religious sense

the devotion of heart and life to God, obedience to divine commands e.g. piety as blessed service. Service is different from obligation. Service demands first and foremost love, compassion, dedication, sacrifice commitment and prayer. The aim of Christian spirituality of service is serving the people and imitating what Jesus our Lord had said, "I've come to serve, not to be served" (Mt 20: 28). Let us analyse the spirituality of service under three subtitles.

a. Spirit of Loving Trust in God: Spirit of loving trust in God implies completely believing in the providence of God. Loving trust in God should be modelled on that of Christ. MCs constitution, article no. 23 speaks of "Spirit of loving trust in God." Jesus trusted His Father so completely that He entrusted His whole life and the mission for which He was sent into the world. Further the constitution also speaks of Mother Mary who showed her complete trust in God by accepting God's plan in her life (Lk 1: 49). St. Teresa proposed first Jesus as model and then the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph for their loving trust in God. St. Teresa's conviction was that divine providence is much greater than our little minds and wills. Thus we all need to possess that kind of trust in the divine providence that is unshakable and in the same manner as Christ trusted his Father.

b. Spirit of Total Surrender: The Blessed Virgin Mary said "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word" (Lk 1: 38). MCs constitution article no. 24 articulates the 'Spirit of Surrender.' Mother Mary was completely emptied herself to God so God filled her life with grace. The article 24 obviously

speaks of total surrender to God. "To offer him our free will, our reason, our whole life in pure faith so that we may think his thought in our minds, do his work through our hands and love with our hearts." "Total surrender consists in giving ourselves completely to God. We must give ourselves fully to God because God had given himself to us. Trials and suffering is the surest test of one's blind surrender. Surrender is also true love. The more we surrender the more we love God. Jesus when he was on the Cross said "Father into your hands I commend my Spirit" (Lk 23: 46). Therefore total surrender means to be at God's disposal, to be used as it pleases him and to belong to him.

c. Spirit of Cheerfulness: St. Teresa attaches utmost importance to spirit of cheerfulness. She is convinced that the poor not only deserve service and dedication but also the joy that belongs to human love. "She was convinced that a sister filled with joy preaches without preaching." Cheerfulness is of a generous person. It is often a cloak that hides a life of sacrifice. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Christ wanted to share his joy with his apostles. "My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. (Jn 15: 11). The joy of Jesus is the sunshine of His Father's love, hope of eternal happiness. Article 25 a and b, point out that joy is prayer, joy is love. A joyful heart is the normal result of heart burning with love and God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9: 7).

In the life of Mary also joy was her strength. She went in haste with joy to help her cousin who was in Judea. The visitation of our Lady to St. Elizabeth shows her readiness to serve those in

need. One of the signs of a genuine vocation is this readiness to serve others. The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth is also the visitation of Jesus to John the Baptist. There was certain communication between the two children in the womb of their mothers. "As soon as I heard the sound of your greetings the child in my womb leaped for joy (Lk 1: 44). The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth was an ordinary event. It is not like the events of Immaculate Conception or Assumption. But through an ordinary event, extraordinary things happened.

First of all Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1: 41)

Secondly, She exclaimed "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1: 42) which forms part of the 'Hail Mary' which we recite so often during the day.

Thirdly, John the Baptist was also filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1: 44, 1: 15)

Fourthly, Mary uttered the hymn, the 'Magnificat' "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." (Lk 1: 46- 47) which forms part of the liturgy of the hours, evening prayer.

Through the ordinary events, extraordinary things could happen. This is true also in our life. Through our ordinary actions we can bring grace, peace and help to others like St. Teresa in our mission and ministry.

3. Mother Mary as a Fountain of Encouragement: St. Teresa did not teach her followers high sounding Mariology. In fact she taught them how to pray to our Lady with love

and to imitate her in virtue. Mother Mary's words are the source of help as it happened at Cana. St. Teresa prays to Our Lady with filial devotion to make the heart of MCs meek and humble and fill them with grace. She pleads to our lady to give her and her followers a heart free from sin and filled with the conviction that they belong to Jesus totally.

### **Conclusion**

St. Teresa is a gift to our country because she lived the gospel from an experience in a given situation. Her spirituality of service is an epitome for the modern missionaries because she witnessed Jesus through her service and her spirituality of service is accepted in the multi religious country, India. Thus she has contributed as an outline to the missionaries how to witness Jesus in their missionary endeavour. She was welcomed and loved by all in the world. In the same way a modern

missionary can adopt her simple method with greater value to witness Christ. Consequently the gospel will be actualized in the life of the modern missionary as "For I was hungry and you gave me to eat, for I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was stranger you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave clothing, I was sick you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25: 28). May the life and the message of St. Teresa continue to fascinate many more youngsters in the days to come to serve the Lord in his vineyard. To conclude in the words of St. Teresa "Put your hand in His (Jesus) hand, and walk alone with him. Walk ahead because if you look back you will Go Back". May our Mother keep interceding for the world and St. Teresa of Calcutta keep inspiring all the modern missionaries to serve the needy.

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### **JOKES**

Customer: To reach bus stand how much do you charge?

Auto driver: Rs. 50

Customer: Can you come for Rs. 5?

Auto driver: Who will come for Rs. 5?

Customer: You sit in the back seat and I will take you to the bus stand. Then you can pay me just Rs.5.

\*\*\*\*\*

Police: Is there any last wish that you have before we could hang you tomorrow?

Prisoner: My last wish ..... Hang me upside down!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Sardar: You cheated me!!

Shop keeper: No, I sold you a good radio

Sardar: Radio label shows made in Japan but radio says this is "All India Radio"!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

## Nativity Feast Celebration at Maria Bhavan

Mariya F. Madtha

"The day of the Nativity of the mother of God is a day of Universal joy, because through the mother of God, the entire human race was renewed and the sorrow of the first mother, Eve was transformed into joy". - St John Damaseene



emphasized the blessings and healing received by various people. He focused on her obedience, humility, simplicity and purity. After the talk Holy Mass was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Michael Sagayaraj. In his homily he narrated the

On September 8<sup>th</sup> Catholics all over the world celebrate the feast of the Nativity with great honor and devotion. It is believed that mother Mary is our lady of health. On this day many devotees visit mother Mary's shrine with the intention of regaining their health. In this day we also commemorate all the daughters in the world.

For the people of coastal Karnataka this feast signifies, Nativity feast, harvest festival, feast of our culture and tradition, feast of remembering our ancestors, and loved ones, family feast.

Montfort associates of Bangalore gathered at Maria Bhavan to celebrate the feast of Nativity on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at 4.30 pm. There were 35 associates, three priests and the brothers of the Maria Bhavan community. The celebration started with a PowerPoint presentation by Rev. Fr. Peter Mascarenhas on Mother Mary's life. He

exceptional qualities of mother Mary. Her total surrender to God and saying yes to God's will to Immaculate Conception. With humility, mercy and gratitude we can win ones heart.

After the Holy Mass a candle light chariot possession was arranged by offering flowers to mother Mary. The procession started from the entrance by reciting rosary and singing hymns to mother Mary and ended near the grotto. There the gathering offered flowers to mother Mary by praising her glory.

After the program all the members gathered in the refectory. President Mr. William Rodrigus welcomed the gathering and showed his happiness by responding his call to attend the celebration. Secretary Mr. Stany Lobo proposed vote of thanks, he also thanked Fr. Peter Mascaranhes for the arrangements and Fr. Selva Kumar for all the support and help given to make this event a great success.

Treasurer Mr. Percy Pereira read out the accounts. Everyone enjoyed the sumptuous dinner prepared by Montfortians sponsored by the Associates.



## St. Montfort School, Kurupam

Francis B. smm

**St. Montfort School**, is a dream came true for SMM India. Inspired by our holy founder St. Montfort, 40 years of our ministry in India, has been to the last, least and lost of the society. Simple lifestyle with minimum facilities but maximum service has been our way of life over the four decades. St. Louis Marie de Montfort was so dear to the poor, so do the Montfortians to the poor of our times. One such daring yet noble apostolate is **SAURA TRIBAL MISSION**, in south India. It is a people centered mission with holistic development. Spiritual, social and educational ministry is all that happens in our tribal mission.

After having rendered enduring service in this area, we dreamed about a better educational facility for the tribal and deprived



children of the area. Daring, dedication and disciplined hard work of

the missionaries, brought fruitful result - that is, the construction of St. Montfort English Medium



School at Kurupam. It is the hard work of the members of the Province, particularly the community at Shanthinagar Tribal Mission and with the constant inflow of support and guidance made it possible by the Congregation.

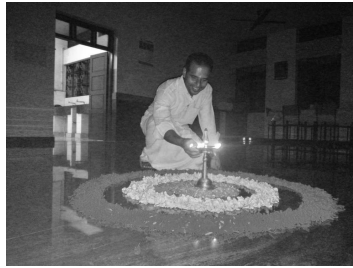
On July 3, 2017 St. Montfort School at Kurupam was blessed by Most Rev. Dr. Innayya, the Bishop of Srikakulam. It was inaugurated by Very Rev. Fr. James Paul Brady, in the presence of the Provincial and his team. It was a small yet colourful celebration in a very pleasant atmosphere. The tribal children added life and beauty with their dances. All the dignitaries were felicitated and honoured while acknowledging their valuable contributions for the success of the school. We do pray and hope that, through the educational ministry in this tribal and poor region, may bring the light of Christ to the least of the society. We the Shanthinagar community thank all the benefactors and well wishers for supporting this mission and the success of the school.



## Onam at Maria Bhavan Bosco smm

A festival that is celebrated with unanimous fervor across Kerala is that of Onam. It is a great festival for those who in one way or the other belong to the land of Kerala, the 'God's own country'. In fact, not just in the state, irrespective of geography, Onam is a festival that brings the global Malayali community together. Primarily a harvest festival, it unites people across religions.

The festival also has a legend associated with it. It is said that during the reign of the Asura king Mahabali, Kerala was in what is best described as the golden era. This was exploited by the other gods, who felt threatened by Mahabali's growing popularity. Lord Vishnu, in the avatar of Vamana, descended on earth to send Mahabali to the underworld. He was granted a boon as a reward for the good deeds that he had accomplished - of being able to come back once every year to visit his people. It is in honor of this return that people celebrate Onam with great pomp and show. It is believed



that even the nature prepares itself with flowers, fruits and prosperity.

The community of Maria Bhavan also celebrated the joy and cheerfulness of the Onam which began with the holy Eucharist presided by Fr. Varaprasad SMM. The Pookkalam (a floral decoration in circles to show the prosperity of the people when Mahabali comes) was made under the guidance of Jinson SMM to enhance the celebration. Onasadya, a meal consisting numerous and varieties of food items, was another important aspect of our celebration. Happiness overloaded, the brothers enjoyed the time after the meal in singing and dancing.

Every year, the Onam celebrations offers us and reminds us of a time where equality, justice and well being of all prevailed. Whether the Mahabali be a story or myth or part of the history, we need to transfer to our next generation, the values and goodness it gives us, even if it is momentary we need it in this world which loses its goodness.



A statue of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, a French Catholic priest and mystic, is shown on the left side of the image. He is depicted in a light-colored, possibly white or cream, robe with a sash. His right arm is raised in a gesture of blessing or invitation, with his index finger pointing upwards. His left arm is bent, and he holds a small, ornate cross. The background is a vibrant blue with abstract, wavy patterns. The text 'God Alone' is written in a large, bold, yellow font with a black outline, slanted upwards to the right.

# God Alone

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in India are happy  
to invite you  
to participate  
in our mission  
and*

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## MONTFORT MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

