

Mary Through Saintly Eyes: Holy Mary, Mother of God



Women of Grace® is a Catholic apostolate whose mission is to transform the world one woman at a time by affirming women in their dignity and vocation as daughters of God and in their gift of authentic femininity through ongoing spiritual formation.

The vision of Women of Grace® is a civilization and culture imbued with the spirit of the Gospel renewed, revitalized, and healed through the love of God.

Through its conferences, programs, publications, and curricula, Women of Grace® seeks to authenticate the genius of women, defined by Pope John Paul II as connoting the essential nature and spirit of woman, so profoundly portrayed in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Women of Grace Journal is a spiritual journal intended for personal use during prayer and reflection to help women focus their minds and hearts on God, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and enhance their understanding of the teachings of the Church. The Journal is ideal for group use especially with Women of Grace Study Groups.

All of the outreaches of Women of Grace® have been placed under the protection of Saint Joseph and is dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. We rejoice in the paths illuminated by all of the great women saints, especially Saints Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein).

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How to Use the Women of Grace Journal

Your Women of Grace Journal For Daily Prayer and Reflection helps you enter into a deepening experience of prayer and relationship with God through its daily GraceLines and accompanying articles. Uniquely, it also provides you with a place to record your thoughts, inspirations, insights, and illuminations. Thus, it becomes a treasured keepsake of your journey with God – a personal record of your own salvation history.

The following steps help you maximize your *Journal* experience:

- 1. Compose yourself for your time of prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine your mind, open your heart, and help you be receptive to His movement within you. Remember, God is always with you. Place yourself in His presence.
- 2. Review the monthly theme and pray to receive the monthly grace. Grace is a gift given to us by God out of His abundant love. In fact, it is a share in the Divine Life itself. Daily prayer helps us be receptive to the grace God offers us as do the sacraments and a virtuous life.
- 3. Pray the GraceLine. Read the GraceLine slowly. Ponder it in your heart. Let the mystery awaken and unfold within you by noting any words, phrases, ideas that move you in some way. Does it spark a memory? Give you a new insight? Instruct you? What is God saying to you through it? You may stay with a GraceLine for more than one day if you sense God at work in you through it.
- **4.** Answer the questions in *For Reflection* and *journal* **your insights.** These questions are "prompters," meant to help you dig deeply into the *GraceLine* to discover the grace meant just for you. Answer all of them or none of them depending on what the Holy Spirit is revealing to you.

Then record your insights, thoughts, and the movements of your heart in your *Journal*. This solidifies the grace you have received and provides you with a record of God's transforming love in your life. Your personal "salvation history."

5. Respond to God's action within you through a prayer. This prayer should be a prayer of the heart. It is, in a way, your *fiat* or "yes" to God's movement in you. It may be a prayer of thanksgiving. Sometimes, a prayer of repentance. You might pray for more insight or guidance, or your prayer could be a deep interior cry asking for God's healing love and mercy. Know that God hears you with a ready and loving ear.





Dear Women of Grace,

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that in the liturgical season of Advent the Church "makes present [the] ancient expectancy of the Messiah," so that "by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful [can] renew their ardent desire for his second coming" (#524). Advent, then, is a time of waiting, watching, and preparing for the coming of the Christ Child whose life and death bring us eternal salvation.

My prayer for you is that this month's *Journal* will aid you in your faith-filled effort to make this Advent a holy time of preparation as you ponder anew the Mystery of the Incarnation and the Woman whose "fiat" made it so. May we take a mystical journey with Mary from the moment of her annunciation to the birth of her Child, and may she deliver us safely into His holy and loving heart.

To that end, I am offering you St. Louis de Montfort's prayer of *Consecration to Jesus Through Mary*. His Mother, the vessel chosen and prepared by God for His Son, is the perfect vessel for us to journey to Him.

Have a blessed and holy Advent and a joyous and "Mary Christmas!"

I faithfully remain, Your sister in Christ, Johnnette Benkovic Williams

Prayer of Consecration to Jesus Through Mary

I, (say your name), a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today into thy hands, O Immaculate Mother, the vows of my Baptism.

I renounce Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before.

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



Divine Revelation Mary, Mother of God S

Every time we profess the Nicene Creed, we affirm our belief that Jesus Christ is inseparably true God and true man. "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

But there was a time when this teaching caused one of the greatest controversies in the Church's history, and it all swirled around a single question - was Mary truly the Mother of God?

The scene was set in 428 when a cleric named Nestorius was installed as



Bishop of Constantinople. He became involved in a theological dispute between factions in the Church and the local government over whether Mary could properly be called *Theotokos* (Greek for Mother of God). One faction of the Church and the general public supported the title *Theotokos*, while the reigning aristocracy thought she should be called *Anthropatokos* - or "mother of man." Nestorius proposed a compromise and suggested the title *Christotokos* or Mother of Christ, meaning that Mary was the mother of Christ only in respect to His humanity.

But this decision was far weightier than it may first appear because if Mary was only the mother of the human Jesus. and not of the Divine Son of God, that meant Jesus Christ had to have been two separate persons. Consider just one ramification of this belief: if Jesus was two separate persons, which one died on the cross, Jesus or God? If it was Jesus the human, then the atonement is not of divine quality and would therefore be insufficient to cleanse us from our sins. In other words, determining whether Mary was the mother of God became essential for defining one of the most fundamental truths of our Faith - that Jesus Christ was both God and Man.

Known as the Hypostatic Union, the Catechism teaches that in Christ there are two natures, one divine and one human, and that these two natures are inseparably united in *one* Person, namely, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. This most perfect union is called the Hypostatic Union (Catechism Nos. 252, 466).

As Dr. Mark Miravalle explains, "The objection of the Nestorians



[followers of Nestorius] against the term *Theotokos* was based on a false notion of motherhood, and also of the Hypostatic Union. To understand the Catholic dogma, we must have exact ideas concerning both."

Motherhood is the relationship when established а woman communicates to her offspring a nature identical to her own, and this by means of a true generation (conception, gestation, birth), he explains. A mother is the parent of the whole person, not just the physical body. For instance, this is why we would say that St. Ann was Mary's mother. "She was the mother of Mary (i.e., this whole and complete person: Mary), and not only of Mary's body, even though we know that St. Ann did not furnish Mary's soul," Dr. Miravalle explains.

Mary did not supply Christ with either His divine nature or his divine Person because both existed from all eternity. She furnished only His human nature, but since that human nature was inseparably united to the divine Person in the very first instant of Christ's conception, we say that Mary conceived and gave birth to a Son who is truly God, and hence she is the Mother of God.

"The fact that there are two natures

in Christ entails a twofold sonship. Because His divine nature was generated from the Father from all eternity, Christ is the true Son of God the Father, Because His human nature was generated from Mary, Christ is the true Son of Mary. However. this twofold sonship does not imply two Sons. Being one undivided Person. Christ the Son of the eternal Father is absolutely identical with Christ the Son of Man.

Hence Mary is truly the Mother of God.

"By destroying this oneness of Christ's Person, the Nestorians were led to deny Mary's divine Motherhood. By this same token, when the Church defended and defined Mary's divine Motherhood, she was also safeguarding the revealed Catholic doctrine concerning the Hypostatic Union. They necessarily stand or fall together."

But once the compromise was struck, Nestorius began to preach his beliefs that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man, Jesus Christ, not God, the "Logos." Eventually, his lectures were published and circulated beyond Constantinople until they reached the jurisdiction of the great Saint Cyril of Alexandria.

Saint Cyril began to preach against Nestorius and published his famous "Letter to the Monks" in which he

> affirmed the reality of the humanity of Christ and the singleness of His Divine Person, He spent the winter of 429 and early 430 studying Nestorius' sermons and preparing a dossier which included extracts from Nestorius' writings as well as extensive patristic writings supporting the belief that Mary was the Mother of God.

> A copy of the dossier was sent to both the Roman

Emperor Theodosius and Pope Celestine of Rome. Shortly after Pope Celestine formally condemned Nestorius' teaching, Emperor Theodosius announced a call for an ecumenical council to consider the whole issue of the Nestorian controversy. The council was to be held at Ephesus on the Pentecost of 431 (which was on June 7th that year).

Bishops began to arrive in Ephesus well before Pentecost, with Nestorius and 16 of his bishops among the first to arrive. St. Cyril arrived a few days



before Pentecost with 50 bishops, but many bishops were delayed in arriving, which caused the opening of the council to be postponed for nearly three weeks. Because many of the bishops were becoming sick, and a few even died, from the hot weather and the limited facilities of the city, St. Cyril felt compelled to start the Council.

However, one of the absent bishops, John of Antioch, was a dear friend and supporter of Nestorius, so a movement began to have the council called illegitimate because it started without him. As a result, when the First Session of the Council began on Monday morning, June 22nd, at Saint Mary's Cathedral with Saint Cyril presiding, Nestorius refused to show himself.

The proceedings went on without him. Two acquaintances of Nestorius testified that the Bishop of Constantinople had repeatedly declared that "We must not say that God is two or three months old." One of these witnesses also said that Nestorius believed the Son who died on the cross was to be distinguished from the Word of God.

The Creed of Nicea was read aloud at the Council, at which time it was declared that this was the standard faith of Orthodoxy that was to be followed. All agreed that Nestorius had blasphemed Jesus Christ and was thereafter to be excluded from "the episcopal dignity and from all priestly communion." The decree was signed by 197 bishops on June 23, 431.

A brief notification addressed to "the new Judas" was sent to Nestorius. Apparently, he refused to receive it, so the document was pegged to his door.

The people of Ephesus were overjoyed at the decision of the Council and escorted the bishops home that evening with torches and incense. "When they heard that the wretched men were deposed, they all began with one voice to cry out in praise of the Holy Council, glorifying God because the enemy of the Faith had fallen," St. Cyril described.

But the intrigues were not yet over. When John of Antioch finally arrived, he was disappointed that the Council convened without him and responded by declaring it illegal and opening his own "little council" with 43 bishops in attendance. This caused great division and lengthy debates about the legitimacy of the original Council even after it concluded, but an accord was eventually reached between Saint Cyril and St. John to accept the appellation "mother of God," and the dogma on the human and divine aspects of Jesus who was thereafter declared to be of two separate natures though perfectly united in Christ. Known as the Formula of Union, the Council stated:

"We confess then, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man . . . born of Mary the Virgin according to His humanity, one and the consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ. one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be the Mother of God because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to Himself the temple He took from her."

We Salute You, Theotokus

Mary, Mother of God, we salute you. Precious vessel, worthy of the whole world's reverence, you are an ever-shining light, the crown of virginity, the symbol of orthodoxy, an indestructible temple, the place that held him whom no place can contain, mother and virgin. Because of you the holy gospels could say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We salute you, for in your holy womb was confined him who is beyond all limitation. Because of you the holy Trinity is glorified and adored; the cross is called precious and is venerated throughout the world; the heavens exult; the angels and archangels make merry; demons are put to flight; the devil, that tempter, is thrust down from heaven; the



fallen race of man is taken up on high; all creatures possessed by the madness of idolatry have attained knowledge of the truth; believers receive holy baptism; the oil of gladness is poured out; the Church is established throughout the world; pagans are brought to repentance. . . .

Behold then the joy of the whole universe. Let the union of God and man in the Son of the Virgin Mary fill us with awe and adoration. . . . To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

From a homily by St. Cyril of Alexandria delivered during the Council of Ephesus, 431 A.D.

Word to Know

Hypostatic Union - Hypostasis means person or individual, and the hypostatic union is the union of the two distinct natures of God and man in the one person of Jesus Christ. Christ is true God and true man: the two natures are inseparably united without confusion . . . what is proper to each is conserved; but they are united in one person and one subsistence. There are consequently two wills, and two operations." - A Catholic Dictionary, Donald Attwater (General Editor)



"... [Mary] was predestined first of all to be Mother of God. And the precise reason why the fullness of glory and grace was given her was to make her of it to be the mother of Christ, as St. Thomas expresses it."

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.

For Reflection

When in Sacred Scripture do we first learn of Mary's predestination to be the Mother of God? (Hint: It is in the Old Testament in the first book.) What does this suggest about God's own preparation for the coming of Jesus? What aspect of this preparation does the quote detail? Consider this in

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	salutation to Mary, "Hail, full of
	grace (Lk. 1:28). What
	sacrament was both my
	preparation for Christ as well as
	my initial reception of Him? As
	a chosen daughter of the Most
	High God, I, too, have been
	called to be a Christ-bearer.
	How can I cooperate with grace
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"Evangelical surrender is directed towards receiving God's word. It is like the ploughing which enables the soil to be 'good soil' capable of receiving the divine seed, the seed of life."

--Father Marie-Dominque Philippe, O.P.

For Reflection

According to Father Philippe, what is the relationship between surrender and reception of the "divine seed, the seed of life?" How does Mary demonstrate evangelical surrender to God after Angel Gabriel's announcement? On a scale of 1-10, how do I rank my evangelical surrender with 1 being "unyielding" and 10 being "Marian?" How can I work to move myself forward this Advent season? (Tomorrow's GraceLine may give you "Mary-like" insights).

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"To be a field for the word means to be earth which allows itself to be absorbed by the seed, which assimilates itself to the seed, renouncing itself so as to make the seed germinate. With her motherhood Mary transfused into it her very substance, body and soul, so that a new life might come forth...Mary makes herself completely available as the soil, she allows herself to be used and consumed so as to be transformed into him. -- Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) on Mary's motherhood

For Reflection

Underline the words in Cardinal Ratzinger's quote which characterize Mary's evangelical surrender. Are these action words or passive words? What does this indicate about surrender and the spiritual life? To what extent am I seeking, or even willing, to be such "earth?" What presses me on? What holds me back? Mary, help of all Christians, pray for me. (See tomorrow's GraceLine for a key to Mary's success).



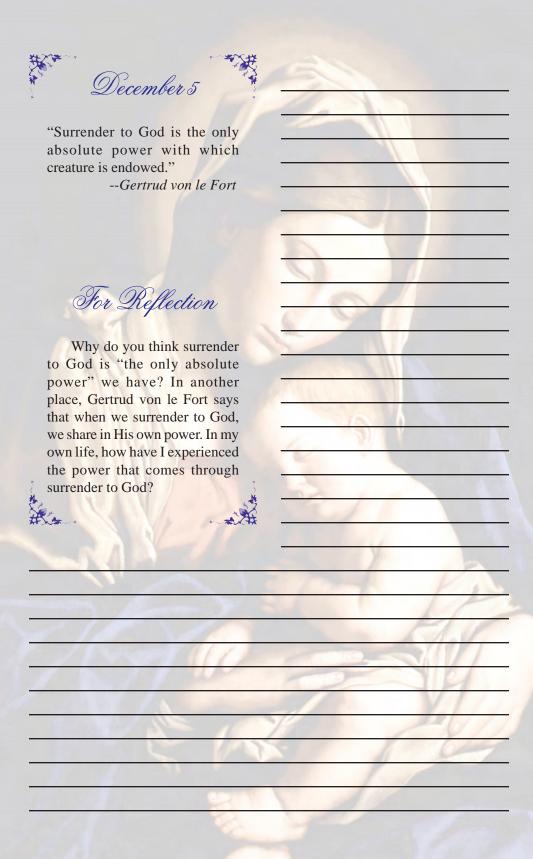
"Mary is the attentive Virgin, who receives the word of God with faith, that faith which in her case was the gateway and path to divine motherhood, for, as St. Augustine realized, "Blessed Mary by believing conceived Him [Jesus] whom believing she brought forth."

--Pope Paul VI Marialis Cultus

For Reflection

Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation. How do you see both of these attitudes of heart implicit in the statement, "Mary is the *attentive* Virgin? What virtue underscores Mary's reception of the word of God – from the moment of the angelic message to her impregnation? What do you make of St. Augustine's words as given in the quote? Journal your insights and reflections, and consider your receptivity in light of Mary's attentiveness, her faith, and her trust. (Tomorrow's GraceLine holds another Marian "secret.")

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"God the Father communicated to Mary His fruitfulness, inasmuch as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that He might give her the power to produce His Son and all the members of His Mystical Body."

---St. Louis Grignion de Montfort

For Reflection

How does this quote illustrate the efficacy of Mary's surrender? What aspect of His own power has God entrusted to her? What does this say to me about the potential efficacy of my surrender to God and my call to spiritual maternity?

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"Within the sphere of humanity and in the natural world, there had to be a pure and spotless being capable of receiving the divine element, a feminine principle enlightened by grace."

--Nicholas Berdyaev

For Reflection

Meditate on this quote in light of the Blessed Mother. Think about it with regard to God's initiative in her life and her capacity to surrender to His Holy Will. Consider the words "pure" and "spotless." Why do you think these qualities would be essential to receive the "divine element?" Read paragraphs 490-493 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. How does this increase your understanding of Mary as woman, as disciple, as who she is in the plan of God?

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Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

Mary Immaculate
"Pure as the snow," we say. Ah! never flake
Fell through the air
One-tenth as fair
As Mary's soul was made for Christ's dear sake.
Virgin Immaculate,
The whitest whiteness of the Alpine snows,
Beside thy stainless spirit, dusky grows.
"Pure as the stars." Ah! never lovely night
Wore in its diadem
So pure a gem
As that which fills the ages with its light.
Virgin Immaculate,
The peerless splendors of thy soul by far
Outshine the glow of heaven's serenest star.

----Eleanor C. Donnelly

For Reflection

Dear Mother, You were kept free from the stain of original sin so the Word of God could make His abode in you. Today, on this feast which celebrates your Immaculate Conception, I ask you to obtain for me the grace I need to resist sin and to live for Christ alone (NAME THE SIN MOST DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO RESIST AND ANY OTHER FAILING OF WHICH YOU ARE AWARE). Be the mother of my soul, Mary. Nurture me in your tender heart. Take my hand and lead me to your Son. Amen.



"The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life."

--Lumen Gentium #56

For Reflection

After careful reflection, list the truths this paragraph contains in light of Genesis 3:15, the Immaculate Conception, and the Annunciation. How do they point to God's reality as the "Father of mercies?" Given this paragraph, why do you think Mary is the perfect one to teach us about our feminine call and mission? Consider the time of Mary's pregnancy. Based on Scripture and your own insights, how do you think this, Our Lady's "advent," reflected a continued attitude of surrender? Journal your thoughts. We will consider this time in Our Lady's life through the next few GraceLines.



"And when the hour had come that was to move the long days onward to Bethlehem...a moment paused, above a quiet place, and found, just this, a woman wrapped in silence, and the seed of silence was her heart that tried to give all that it held to give, and ever more."

--John W. Lynch — excerpt from A Woman Wrapped in Silence

For Reflection

These beautiful words poetically describe Our Lady as she waited for and anticipated the birth of her Son. What thoughts and insights come to you through the description "a woman wrapped in silence?" What interior attitude marked Mary's silence? What does the poetry suggest? What about Luke 2:19, 51? Consider these lines in light of the quotes of Father Marie-Dominique Philippe and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. How can I imitate Our Lady and also become "a woman wrapped in silence?"

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A Woman Wrapped in Silence

by John W. Lynch A classic epic poem about Mary's fidelity and piety

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"Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life."

--Simone Weil

For Reflection

Why do you think this is so? How is the spiritual life demonstrated in the excerpt from A Woman Wrapped in Silence." Note the phrase from today's quote, "waiting patiently in expectation." How does Mary demonstrate this in the excerpt? To what extent has my current Advent been marked by "patient expectation?" In addition to the coming of the Christ Child, is there something else for which I have been waiting? What is it? How can this "advent" be a time of spiritual growth for me as I wait?

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Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

"The Word of God is present in [Mary], dwells within her, and takes hold of all the capabilities of her intelligence, her heart, her sensibility. Her entire being is mobilized by God and for God."
--Father Marie-Dominique Philippe, O.P

For Reflection

Reread the above GraceLine. Enter into the mystery these words express. Let them move you interiorly. Through the use of your imagination "be" with Mary as the Word of God grows within her. What thoughts, inspirations, and insights come to you? In what way does this aspect of Mary's "waiting" prove the truth of yesterday's GraceLine? What do you make of the last sentence, especially the word "mobilized," in light of the time of Mary's maternity? Our Lady of Guadalupe appears to Juan Diego pregnant with Jesus. How do you think she images this quote through her apparitions?



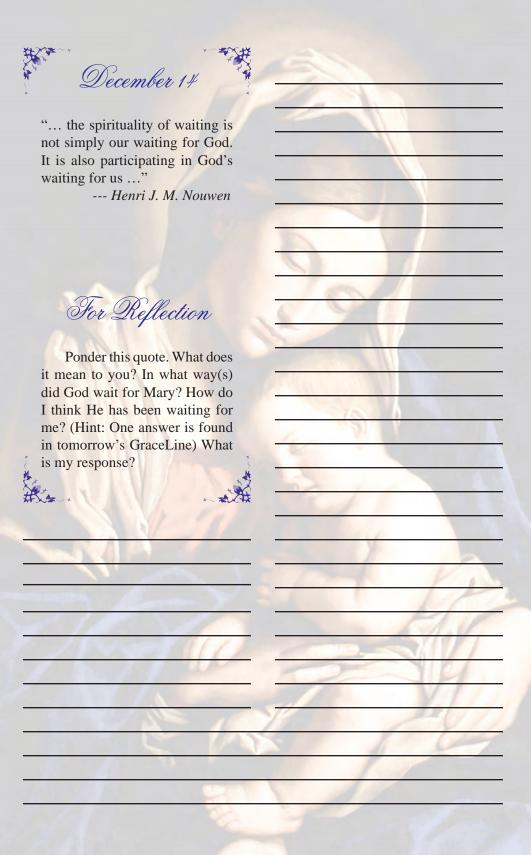
"The secret of waiting is that the seed has been planted, that something has begun."

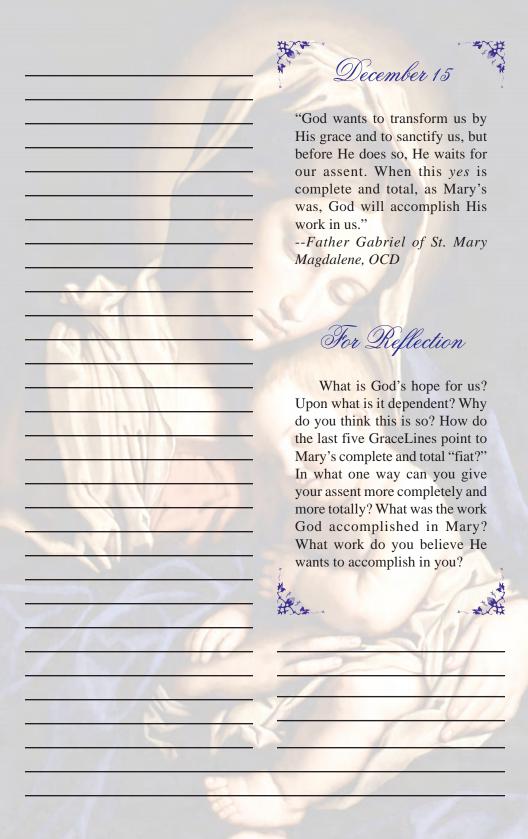
-- Henri J. M. Nouwen

For Reflection

Why do you think knowledge of the planted seed holds the "secret" to waiting? Consider this quote in light of the quote of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (December 3). What seed was planted in Mary? What seeds exemplified her period of waiting (consider what you learned through other quotes)? Identify some of the seeds that have been planted in you during this time of spiritual waiting?

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	December 16
	"Thanks to her vow of surrender, everything is divinely disposed
	for this direct hold of God's word over her."Father Marie-Dominique
	Philippe, O. P.
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31111	For Reflection
	Though Mary received a singular grace from God never to be repeated for all eternity, could it be that my surrender, seeking to
	mirror her own as closely as possible, could divinely dispose me to a greater hold of God's
	word over me? How would I most like to experience that hold? In what one way today can I
	cooperate with grace to make my surrender more like Our Lady's?
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He might be born, and see the stars through eyes That were her eyes in Him! And might she trace Her features in the molding of His brow? Hear her voice in His, and know the need He had of her, and uttered in a cry? And she...and...she might sing for Him at dusk! Might sing, but no, she could not dare this dream... But yet, it was a mother's need to sing... And then a song the world has never heard, Rising in the faintest strains of distance Loveliness had moved along the silver Shining of her dreams, like light returned Within a purer light, until it came To her unfrightened. Caroling of angels' Praise, and love that lifts to lullaby Became as one, and blended for a fragile Music that was hers and only hers... --- My soul doth magnify the Lord:

...Because he that is mighty has done great things to me: and holy is his name.

For Reflection

Every mother dreams of the child she will birth. And as her time drew near, Mary's thoughts of Jesus were marked by the quintessential ponderings of the pregnant woman. But hers were marked by something more as well. Her Son was the Holy One of Israel! In *A Woman Wrapped in Silence*, John W. Lynch speaks of this reality in poetic strain. Where do you see every mother in Mary's musings, and where do you see that which marks her as the Mother of God? Of her thoughts, which echo your own longings?



"The God who made all things gave Himself form through Mary, and thus He made His own creation. He who created all things from nothing would not remake His ruined creation without Mary."

--St. Anselm

For Reflection

Consider the reality of this statement. Jesus Christ, the Word Made Flesh, took on the flesh of Mary *only*. This was His chosen means of "making" His own creation. So, too, does He seek to remake His ruined creation with her as well. What do these words say about me, a daughter re-born through Christ Jesus? How does this statement increase my wonder and awe of the mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of Mary, Mother of God? See tomorrow's GraceLine for another perspective of this awesome truth of our Faith.

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"...Mary acquired a very special relation with God. The blood of Jesus, the heart of Jesus and the body of Jesus are formed by the blood of Mary. By adoring the blood, the sacred wounds and the heart of Jesus, we adore something proceeding from Mary which was assumed by the Son of God."

---Blessed James Alberione

For Reflection

The words of St. Maximilian Kolbe come to mind: "Oh, Immaculata! Who are you?" What great mystery is ours in the Incarnation! Jesus is in Mary. And Mary is in Jesus. Ponder this mystery of our Faith and journal your thoughts. Then pray the following prayer:

Dear Mother, draw me into your Immaculate Heart and chain me there with cords of grace. In this Sweet Vessel, imbue me with the life of your Son, Jesus Christ. Teach me how to imitate your virtues that I may be filled with grace. Carry me to the Sacred Heart of your Son that in Him I may rest forever. Amen

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"No one could ever say more truly than Mary: 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."
--Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene, OCD

For Reflection

Could one ever plumb the depths of the mystery of Mary's holy "advent" – when the Divine Life took shape and form within her? Just as Christ took on her flesh, did she not "take on" something of Him as well? Could this have been what Elizabeth realized when Mary came to her home (Luke 1:40-44)? As Child stirred within her, did currents of grace flood Mary's being in humble response to each baby move? Was she not transformed into Him throughout her nine-month advent? Is this why "No one could ever say more truly than Mary: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me?" Journal your thoughts and insights, your prayer and your reflection.





A Christmas Journey of Prayer

Then the word came with the iron

Of empire forged in it:...

Of enrollment. Lands and provinces,

They'd said, and men and citizens and slaves.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child.

And then,

A door was closed behind them, and the sound

Was loud in isolated emphasis

Against the stillness and the dawn's cold fog...

A woolen shawl

And wrappings clutched together for the cold Enveloped her...

A final glance had shut away this house

That had been hers, the echo of her movement

Fades to silence...

It's true enough, that they had often stopped,

And she had gone, as one among the rest

Of women then to find relief against

The road's fatigues, and when the fires were made,

She worked among them in the fading day.

Did they not know? Could they not feel the nearness?

... The Source? Already, some unheld reflection

Of the questing light that was to rest

Forever in His eyes, looked out from hers

As answering, she said: "To Bethlehem."

For Reflection

"Enveloped her..." In addition to the cold, what else do you think enveloped Mary as she trod the distance to Bethlehem? What is suggested throughout the poem? What do you think enveloped Joseph? What envelops you now? What do you make of the last four lines – consider them in light of the previous GraceLines



A little while,
And then the day was slipping down behind
The dark, and clung there, like a crystal drop...
O, was there here some haste
That pushed the light more hurriedly, as if
This were an ending era, and the last
Of days? ...
Then suddenly, the road
Was turning, and ahead, some clustered roofs...
He turned,
And called to her: "Mary. It is here.
This is Bethlehem.
So now he pulled the bridle on a path
Well worn, ahead of him.

... A fire and feel that there were others near.

A kind of courtyard, square, but with a roof
Around the edges, and a gate to close...

Joseph's eyes were hopeful as he stood
To wait an answer. Then he heard them say,
There was no room for them within the inn.

For Reflection

These lines speak of hope and promise, new beginnings and graces. But, they also speak of the Cross. Where and how do you see both? Consider how the Cross is implicit from the moment of Mary's annunciation to the moment of Golgotha. How is it at the heart of the Christmas story – in its joys and its deprivations? How have your crosses also produced joy? Journal your thoughts. What do you make of the words, "... as if this were an ending era, and the last of days?"



There was no room for them within the inn. And Joseph turned away. To find again,

A woman wrapped in silence. Had she heard? No sign appeared, nor stir of tranquil veil To tell of it.

But Joseph knew. And silence and the glance
That smiled at him could not shut out the need
For shelter that was yet unsaid. He knew!
And suddenly it rose in him again
What it was he knew, and what was here
Beseeching in the night. An innocence
That had been burnished flawless to return
All brightness, till the Inexhaustible
Had searched for her this last and utter grace
That left no more to give.

...Like blessedness that had not been before...
And he was guardian. Guardian!
Whose task to fear not, but to throw his life
About her as a cloak. To be a strength
Between her and the world's uncertainties.
To fend, and guard, and break the fall of harsh
Rejection...

He had not thought refusal was a word Remaining in a language that had held Her name.

For Reflection

What aspects of these lines strike you most? Consider the relationship between Mary and Jesus. How was/is rejection of her, rejection of Him? What is Joseph's response to the rejection? How do you see in his response the charisms that mark authentic masculinity – provider, protector, leader? What do you make of the surprise he experiences as expressed in the last three lines? How have you experienced rejection in your life? During this beautiful season, ask St. Joseph's intercession.



A little girl

Had wandered in the night, and now within The shadows of a broken stall, was waiting, While the night winds and the breath of time Were moving over her.

The beat of pulses and the hush of heat Had made a silence more intent within Surrounding silence. Deepening of night.

...And then a moment's fall,

... A sigh, unheard within the dark, and then...

She...wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

She knelt and held Him close against her heart,

And in the midnight, adoration fused

With human love, and was not separate.

And very near, the man named Joseph came.

He was the first

To find her thus, the first of all the world.

And when her faint smile called for him to take
Him for a breathless moment, he was first
To know there is no other blessedness.

For Reflection

What is Mary's interior response to Jesus? Joseph's? What is your response to Jesus when you behold Him in the Blessed Sacrament? When you receive Him into your being at Holy Communion? How can you increase your devotion to the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Entrust to Mary, Mother of God, your reception of her Son. Her intercession will yield abundant fruit, the Fruit of her womb.



Tall men were these, the shepherds come from flocks And wearing sheephides with the dew still wet Upon the wool...

No further movement

Till the youngest, kneeling still, moved on

From out the rest, and when his eyes had marked

The swaddling bands... and did not shrink at what he saw.

The full words spilled out to her in eagerness

Of quiet flocks, the brightness of the sky...

The music that had sifted

Down, more fragile than the light of stars...

The upswept choirs and surge and flight of wings:

I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger...Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.

For Reflection

How swiftly the shepherds respond! How quickly do I respond to the call of God? What causes me to hold back an immediate response? The angels tell the shepherds, "I bring you tiding of great joy..." How can these words encourage me to respond more quickly. Why do you think it is the youngest who tells Mary about what he saw? Think of this in light of Is. 11:6 and Jesus words in Mk 10:14. What thoughts do you have?



Her Feet Shod with Holiness

And, if our faith had given us nothing more
Than this Example, of all Womanhood,
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, so peaceful, loyal, loving pure –
This were enough to prove it higher and truer
Than all the creeds the world had known before.
Virgin, who lovest the poor and lonely,
If the loud cry of a mother's heart
Can ever ascend to where thou art,
Into thy blessed hands and holy
Receive my prayer of praise and thanksgiving.
Let the hands that bore our Savior bear it
Into the awful presence of God;
For thy feet with holiness are shod,
And, if thou bearest it, he will hear it.

---Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



What qualities does Longfellow cite that underscore for him why Mary is the "Example of all Womanhood?" How have we seen these virtues expressed in the excerpts from *A Woman Wrapped with Silence?* Which of these virtues do I most need to acquire? What does the poet admit is the benefit of offering our prayers to Jesus through Mary, His Mother?

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"True love of God consists in adhering perfectly to His holy will, not desiring to do or to be other than what God indicates for each of us, to the point of becoming, as it were, "a living will of God."

--- Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene, OCD

For Reflection

How does the Blessed Virgin Mary demonstrate true love of God according to the definition given to us in this quote? How and why is she the icon of "a living will of God?" To what extent am I the same? What one strategy in the coming new year can I employ to help me be more so? Add it to my list of resolutions.

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"The first thing which kindles ardor in learning is the greatness of the teacher. What is greater than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she whom Glory Itself chose?"

-- St. Ambrose of Milan

For Reflection

What has Mary taught me in the "course" of this past year? What lesson is she "kindling" in me now? What lesson would I like her to teach me in this coming year? I will formulate a request to her and add it to my list of resolutions.

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December 30
"God could make a bigger world or a wider sky, but He could not raise a pure creature higher than Mary, for the dignity of Mother of God is the highest dignity that can be conferred on a creature." St. Bonaventure
For Reflection
Turn to Page 2. Pray the prayer of Consecration to Jesus Through Mary by St. Louis Grignion de Montfort. Jot down any insights, reflections, inspirations that come to you through this prayer. Adopt this prayer as your own for the next year or write your own prayer of consecration to Jesus through Mary. Add this to your list of resolutions for the coming new year.





Eve of the Feast of Mary, Mother of God

Mother benign of our redeeming Lord, Star of the sea and portal of the skies, Unto thy fallen people help afford Fallen, but striving still anew to rise. Thou who dids't once, while wond'ring worlds adored, Bear thy Creator, Virgin then as now, O by thy holy joy at Gabriel's word, Pity the sinners who before thee bow. --- Roman Breviary, Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin (Hermann Contractus, 1013-1054)

For Reflection

Spend some quiet moments with Mary by reflecting on this antiphon. Journal your reflections.

Thine Eyes of Mercy



Recent scientific evidence about the crucial relationship between a mother and child in the little one's early months causes us to ponder more deeply the selection of Mary by God the Father.

Science is now proving that the human creature has been designed to derive from his primary caregiver more than just sustenance for his body, but sustenance for his mind as well.

One of the most stunning discoveries has been made through the research of neuropsychoanalyst Dr. Alan N. Schore. He discovered that a light inside the human eye generated by nerve endings, is one of the first things a baby looks for in its mother's eyes.

"The maternal gleam, a manifestation of the mother's attention-focusing behavior reflecting heightened interest in her infant, may literally be a sparkle, that is, a flash of light processed by and reflected off of the mother's hyper-exposed cornea and on to the infant's fovea." (1)

This flash of light serves as a kind of "beacon of orientation" he says, and has been shown to be a "stimulus for imprinting in an early critical period."

This imprinting occurs when a mother looks at her baby in a normal and natural way, eyes wide and cooing with delight, which in turn generates a sparkle in her eye that the baby can see. This sparkle of light triggers a reaction

in the baby's brain that begins to imprint it with the necessary information about the expression of human emotion. Researchers suggest that those areas of the brain that grow from the light in the mother's eye are the centers which yield attachment, security, self-worth, and conscience.

Unlike other body systems, such as the heart and lungs that begin to function in the womb, the brain grows by experiences, which make "connections" that act like tracts in a CD.

Catholic author and researcher, Dale O'Leary, explains the process this way:

"When a baby is born, it's brain does not have these experiences and connections, but it has the capacity and the need to search for and look for these experiences." Amazingly, "from the moment a baby is born, even though it can only see 10 inches, it's already looking for eyes - for the sparkle in her mother's eye."

Experiments have proven this. When babies are exposed to faces that sport a frown or narrowed eyes, they turn away. But when they see wide, happy eyes and big smiles, they instantly mirror what they see and begin to smile.

"The little flash of light attracts a baby's gaze," Dale says. "They're looking for it, for their mother's face, and this interaction is slowly building the brain and laying a foundation that nothing can shake."

This is why it is so important that mothers respond correctly to their children. Mothers who are depressed or angry lack the spark that an infant is born craving. Studies have shown that in these cases, the child does not grow fully and spends the rest of her life looking for what she never received.

Knowing all this, could there be any wonder why God fashioned the perfect mother in order to fashion the perfect man?

"This explains the reason for the Immmaculate Conception," Dale explained.

"Jesus came into the world as a complete human being. This means He had to grow physically. There was nothing miraculous about His growth. From the moment of His conception, He grew as a normal human being grows. Not only did He need to be fed physically, but in order to make the proper connections in the brain, He had to have the experiences from Mary."

If Jesus was to grow into a loving, caring, giving and empathetic person, He needed the experience of having a mother who responded to Him from birth with all of the proper emotions, such as love and joy, as well as danger and caution. Her face had to reflect all of the correct emotional triggers - the smile, the frown, the fear - everything that was normal and human would have had to be communicated to Jesus by Mary. Even though His instincts were right, His soul was right, He had to learn everything else from His mother. A woman - a perfect woman - had to serve



as the conduit for this crucial learning to take place.

"Jesus learned morality from Mary's face," Dale said. "This is why it was so very important that she got it right. She had to be the perfect mother in order to grow the brain of her perfect Son. If she was unsure or depressed, it would have shown up in Him. Jesus would not have grown into a full, healthy man. God wasn't going to take any chances on this!"

Unlike Jesus, we cannot see the maternal gleam in Mary's eyes. But is it possible that great healing of our heart and soul could take place by spiritually gazing into her eyes? Lit by the light of the Holy Spirit, Mary's motherly eyes may well help us find new "pathways" to renewal and hope.

And what could be gained for us by contemplating the deep and exquisite

pool of Our Lady's virtues, the evidence of which is caught in her maternal gaze? Could our souls be imprinted with the same virtuous responses to the world around us that she once taught Jesus? How well we too can learn morality by contemplatively meditating on her face.

For instance, how easy it is to imagine the humble joy on her face while serving her husband and son in their modest Nazareth home. From this we learn how to treasure our God-given place in the world, never too proud to serve others. "After the Son of God, no one in the whole world was ever so exalted as Mary, because no one ever humbled himself to the extent that she did," St. Bernardine once said.

How discreetly would her eyes turn down when confronted with anything



unchaste or unclean, teaching us through her pristine purity how to live like daughters of God in a world that wants to use us as objects of pleasure.

And where we find the greatest charity, says Saint Albert the Great. It's easy to imagine the pure and selfless love that must have sparkled like the noonday sun in Mary's eyes. Only a heart empty of self can be filled with love of God and neighbor, and Mary's face teaches us this essential truth. From her we learn how to bite back the nasty remark, to drop what we're doing to help a friend, to be patient with the annoying and compassionate with the downtrodden.

Our minds can conjure an image of the horror on her tear-streaked face as she stands beneath the cross, and yet how often do we see her anguished eyes turn toward heaven and the Father to which she clings so fiercely. It is here that we learn how to accept the crosses in our life, and to trust even when all hope is gone.

Let us spend some time with Mary during this blessed season, asking her to turn her eyes of mercy toward us and allow us to perceive that mystical maternal gleam that can trace upon our souls all we need to know to become the woman God intended us to be.

(1) The cornea is the transparent front of the eye that covers the iris and pupil. The fovea, a small dimple in the middle of the retina, is the center of the eye's sharpest vision and location of most color perception.

For Reflection:

Contemplate the ten evangelical virtues of Mary. Read how Mary exhibited these virtues, then ask yourself how you manifest them in your daily life. Which virtues do you see most often in yourself and which ones do you rarely practice? Take an inventory of your "stock" of virtues and bring it to Mary in prayer, asking her to teach you, as she once taught Jesus, the perfect way to respond in all of the circumstances of life.

Most Pure (Mt 1:18, 20, 23; Lk 1:24,34)

Most Prudent (Lk 2:19; 51)

Most Humble (Lk 1:48)

Most Faithful (Lk 1:45; Jn 2:5)

Most Devout (Lk 1:46-47; Acts 1:14)

Most Obedient (Lk 1:38; 2:21-22; 27)

Most Poor (Lk 2:7)

Most Patient (Jn 19:25)

Most Merciful (Lk 1:39, 56)

Most Sorrowful (Lk 2:35)

For Londering My Journey with Mary Mary Katherine Bushey LMC

The Blessed Mother has walked with me throughout my life even before I was born. My mom delivered three baby boys, one of whom died an hour after birth. She told me she prayed that if God would give her a baby girl, she would name her after the Blessed Mother. I was the next baby born!

When I was 27, my mom died after an 18 month battle with breast cancer. Imitating St. Therese of Lisieux, I asked the Blessed Mother to become my mom.

On December 10th, 1996, two days before the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I had my second miscarriage. Ironically, at the beginning of that same week I received a pilgrim image of our Lady of Guadalupe.

When I came home from the hospital after losing that precious life within, I looked at the pilgrim image and was angry. I felt the Blessed Mother had failed me. Someone had given me her image the week of her feast day, yet I lost my baby. How could that be? Many times I have asked her why she didn't help me. So why was I given that image?

In 1998, I miscarried my third baby and a priest sent me a rose petal that

was touched to a statue of Mary that has been reported to have tears coming from her eyes. Again, here was something from Mary at a very painful time in my life.

Looking back on the day I asked Mary to be my mother, I don't think I really believed she would be my mom,

but that's exactly who she turned out to be!

When I received the pilgrim image, she was showing me, with an actual picture to look at, that she was with me. Just as my mom would have been there, she was with me sharing my pain and suffering. When I received the rose petal, again she was telling me that she shared in my tears. Locked in my

grief, I missed her "presence" but as time went by I realized she has been there for me all along.

The Blessed Mother told St. Juan Diego: "Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else that you need?"

No, my dear Mother, there is nothing else I need - as long as I have you!



Mary Moments Our Lady of Expectation

The little known feast of Our Lady of Expectation occurs on December 18, a week before Christmas and a time the Church refers to as "the Week of Expectation." It originated in Spain at the Tenth Council of Toledo (AD 656)

and was granted to the faithful who felt that because the Annunciation always falls during Lent, there is insufficient time given to celebrate the exalted state of Our Lady's divine maternity. The Feast of Our Lady of Expectation arose as a substitute and came to be known as a "mini-Annunciation."

The responsorial psalm sung in the Votive Mass on this feast recounts the story of King David making way for the solemn entry of God into the sanctuary of the Temple. "Now, this new

sanctuary the heavenly King of glory will enter into is the purest womb of the Virgin Mary, a bridal chamber of adoration," writes the late Fr. Marian Zalecki, OSPPE.

It is during this special week that we are given the gift of time to contemplate the joyful hope of Our Lady in the final days of her wait for the birth of the Redeemer and the moment when she will gaze for the first time upon the face of her God.

The novena to Our Lady of Expectation begins on Dec. 8 and ends

on Dec. 17.

Pray one Father, one Hail Mary, one Glory Be, and one Apostle's Creed.

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R.And she conceived by the Holy Spirit Let us pray:

Almighty and everliving God, by whose power the Incarnate Word found a worthy dwelling in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, grant that by her intercession we may be given abundant blessings

in our earthly pilgrimage and come to the joys of the eternal life to come. We ask this through her only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Contemplating Christ

One day the great saint and doctor of the Church, Teresa of Avila, was about to climb the stairs into the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation when she encountered a beautiful young boy standing on the landing.

"Who are you?" the child asked.

"I am Teresa of Jesus," the saint replied. "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus of Teresa," he said sweetly, then promptly disappeared.

It is said that this vision affected St. Teresa so profoundly that she remained devoted to the Divine Infant for the rest

of her life. In every convent she erected throughout Spain, she brought a statue of the Infant and had a special chapel erected in which He would be honored.

"Let us in some manner resemble our King, who had no house but the stable in Bethlehem where He was born, and the cross where He died," the saint would advise her nuns.

Even though she was gifted with the highest possible mystical graces, and enjoyed visions, locutions, raptures, ecstacies and flights of spirit, St. Teresa's personal spiritual life was firmly grounded in the humanity of Christ. In

fact, she claimed Christ Himself told her that the only way He would reveal great and hidden mysteries to a soul was through the "gate" of His humanity.

"I have definitely seen that we must

enter by this gate if we wish his Sovereign Majesty to reveal to us great and hidden mysteries. A person should desire no other path, even if he is at the summit of contemplation; on this road he walks safely. All blessings come to us through our Lord. He will teach us, for in beholding his life we find that he is the best



example."

For Teresa, the most profound way to enter into the mysteries of Christ's humanity was through the heart of His mother, to whom she was singularly devoted since the death of her own mother at the age of 14.

Referring to Mary as her "Prioress", she extolled her nuns to take the Virgin as their model of a contemplation centered on the sacred humanity of Christ. Mary is the first Christian, she taught, and the perfect model of total adherence to - and communion with - the God-man.

"Let us imitate in something the great humility of the most holy Virgin," the saint taught because it was this virtue which drew God from heaven "into the Virgin's womb." Mary's poverty of spirit allowed her to become "poor with Christ," and her humble contemplation of all the wonders wrought by God teaches us to bow our heads in total assent to His will.

In this way we quickly realize that reflecting on Mary's response to Jesus reveals as much about the humanity of Christ as it does about her.

"The Lord wills to enter into the womb of his most holy Mother. Such is the Lord, he brings liberty with him, and thus he loves to make himself like us."

The Catechism echoes these same sentiments when it teaches us that, "the hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life." (Catechism No. 533).

By meditating upon the Christ Child, we come to Christ as He came to us, weak and small and humble.

"Oh gaze on this Infant Babe!" we read in the Carmelite book of *Little Devotions to the Child Jesus*. "A helpless Child He lies there. His outstretched hands implore us. His innocence attracts us. His poverty moves us to tears. In human form, He has come to associate with the children of men; He has become our Brother. He desires us to love Him with a confiding, an affectionate love. Oh, what wonderful bliss we should find in His pure and sacred Humanity!"

Just as Teresa teaches, meditating on the Divine Child opens many doors behind which lay the great mysteries of our salvation.



"Let us strive to keep this always before our eyes and to rouse ourselves to love him. For if at some time the Lord should grant us the grace of impressing his love on our hearts, all will become easy for us and we shall accomplish great things quickly and without effort," she says.

She also warns that at any time during these and other loving reflections on the humanity of Christ, God may choose to reveal Himself in the same mysterious way that He once did to Simeon during the Presentation.

"The just Simeon didn't see any more than the glorious, little, poor child," Teresa explains. "For by the way the child was clothed and by the few people that were in the procession, Simeon could have easily judged the babe to be the son of poor people rather than the Son of our heavenly Father. But the Child himself made Simeon understand."

And so will He do for us.

There is only one thing He asks in return, the saint teaches. "Whenever we think of Christ we should recall the love that led him to bestow on us so many graces and favors, and also the great love God showed in giving us in Christ a pledge of his love; for love calls for love in return."

Flowers of the Fairest

The Christmas rose is a true Christmas flower because it blooms in the depths of winter in the mountains of central Europe. Legend says the flower sprung from the frozen soil of Bethlehem on the night Christ was born when a poor shepherdess sat weeping for lack of a gift - not even



a simple flower - for the Newborn King. One of the angels who heralded Christ's birth saw her tears and came to her aid, brushing aside the snow to reveal a lovely white flower tipped in pink - which became known forevermore as the Christmas rose.

The 15th century German folk song, "Lo How A Rose," proclaims the glorious symbolism of this little white flower and the Holy Night when first it bloomed.

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as those of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night
Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
Mary we behold it,
the Virgin Mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.

Resources offered through Women of Grace Soul

Full of Grace Foundational Study

Vatican II asked women to accept God's urgent call to 'aid humanity in not falling.' Throughout the United States and around the world, women are coming together to celebrate the great gift of authentic femininity. They are discovering the special grace of their gender and the awesome mission God has entrusted to them. Through dynamic presentations, stimulating curricula, and lively discussions, Women of Grace study group participants experience the transformation that only comes through Jesus Chritst. Johnnette Benkovic, host of Women of Grace on EWTN,



developed this small-group study program to catchize all women so they can heed God's special call. Based on Johnnette's book, *Full of Grace, Women* and *the Abundant Life*, it is infused with Sacred Scripture, magisterial teaching, Church doctrine, and the Catechism. Women will grow in knowledge of their faith, deepen their prayer life, meet a variety of women saints, and come to see the Blessed Virgin Mary as their exemplar.

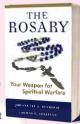
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The Rosary: Your Weapon for Spiritual Warfare

The Rosary is much more than an optional Catholic devotion for the old and dying. In fact, it is a vibrant and powerful intercessory tool in the hands of valiant spiritual warriors. From the moment Our Lady entrusted it to St. Dominic early in the 13th century, the rosary has been at the heart of authentic Catholic devotion. It has also been an indispensable weapon in the hands of intercessors and those who actively resist the workings of the devil. In *The Rosary*, Johnnette Benkovic, teams up with her producer and cohost Thomas K. Sullivan, the creator of the Warrior Rosary, to explore why the rosary is the weapon for such a time as this. Together, they've gathered some of the most



astonishing historical and contemporary accounts of victories associated with the rosary, along with their own inspiring personal experiences. Readers will discover insights that will enhance their own experience of the rosary, including special prayers based on the lives and writings of the saints who understood it's power.



Graceful Living, Meditations to Help You Grow Closer to God Day by Day

Experience the truth and grace of the Catholic faith through daily pearls of wisdom from 2000 years of spiritual masters — from the first years of Christianity through the present day. Each day brings you a delicate sample of the truth of the Catholic faith, as well as practical and incisive questions to stimulate prayer and reflection. Author, Johnnette Benkovic, has collected these spiritual gems over the course of many years and has brought them together for the first time in this book for daily meditation. These reflections will challenge you to go

deeper in your prayer and self-examination, bringing to light aspects of each quotation that might be missed at first glance. Moreover, they will help you start your day by lifting your heart, soul, and mind to God.