

# THE KNIGHT OF THE *Immaculata* E-PUBLICATION OF THE MI IMMACULATA, USA

## MARY'S COMPASSION AND CO-OPERATION

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# THE NATIVITY OF MARY



by Ronald L. Rodrigues, MI National President

**D**ear Knights of the Immaculata, Marial! Everyone loves birthday celebrations. The Church gives us a day to celebrate the birth of our Blessed Mother by her mother St. Anne.

The Church doesn't celebrate the birthday of most saints but there are two special births we do celebrate: the birth of the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist. They were both born filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary was the Immaculate Conception, born free from all original sin. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit, sanctified in Saint Elizabeth's womb (Lk 1:15). The Church has celebrated Mary's birth since the sixth century. A September birth was chosen because the Eastern Church begins its liturgical year in September, and Mary is the beginning of God's plan for our salvation.

The feast is celebrated on September 8th, nine months after the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Most churches and religious rites celebrate the feast on this day, but the Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox churches celebrate the feast on May 9th. The Biblical Canon doesn't record Mary's birthday. The earliest known record of Mary's birth is found in the Gospel of James (5:2), an Apocryphal Protoevangelium text from the late second century. Her parents are known as St. Anne and St. Joachim. According to the text, Anne and Joachim pray for a child and received the promise of a

child that will be part of God's plan for salvation for the world. The birth of Mary is written in the third chapter, called Sura, of the Muslim text, the Quran. It references her father Imran and her mother Hannah. The chapter is named after her father Imran. Similar to the Old Testament story of Hannah, Hannah, the mother of Mary prayed to God to have a child and vowed if the prayer was answered she would dedicate the child to God. She also prayed for the child to be protected from Satan and the Muslim tradition records a hadith, which states that the only children born without the "Touch of Satan" were Mary and Jesus. Although the circumstances of Mary's birth and infancy are not recorded in the Bible, other documents and traditions describing the events are written by some of the earliest Christian writers from the first centuries of the Church.



**Daily Holy Mass** will be offered throughout 2023 for the MI-USA and all MI Members, living and deceased, at the City of the Immaculata established by St. Maximilian Kolbe near Warsaw, in Poland.

Send your prayer intentions to be placed in the MI Book of Intentions at the feet of Our Lady and St. Maximilian Kolbe's first class relic: [PrayerRequest@MissionImmaculata.com](mailto:PrayerRequest@MissionImmaculata.com)

There are also many pieces of art from medieval times depicting Mary as a baby born from St. Anne. St. Augustine speaks of Mary's birth as the catalyst of Jesus' work. He tells the earth to rejoice and shine forth in the light of her birth, "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley." "Because of her birth, our sinful nature inherited from our first parents is changed." St. Andrew of Crete said, "That all of creation is joyful on this special day because the birth of Mary is a joyful prelude to the gift of humanity's salvation." In one area of France, they celebrate Marymas, also known as "Our Lady of the Grape Harvest" among the winegrowers. The best grapes are brought to the church to be blessed and then some of them are hung on the hands of the statue of Mary. Afterward, a large festive meal including grapes is eaten. In many areas of India, they celebrate the birth of Mary in different ways. Mary's Nativity is a major celebration for the Christian followers of St. Thomas. It is celebrated as an octave, eight-day abstinence from meat and alcohol from September 1st to the 8th. Other areas have special prayers and special food dishes are shared. In another area, the Mangalorean Catholics have a feast called Monti Fest, which is a major family celebration, similar to our Thanksgiving festival, where they bless the new crops and have a meal with the blessed grain of the harvest.

(Continues on pg. 14)



# MARY'S COMPASSION AND CO-OPERATION

## FROM THE MARIAN GATECHESSES OF POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

In accepting with complete availability the words of the Angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she would become the Mother of the Messiah, Mary began her participation in the drama of Redemption. Her involvement in her Son's sacrifice, revealed by Simeon during the presentation in the Temple, continues not only in the episode of the losing and finding of the 12-year-old Jesus, but also throughout his public life. However, the Blessed Virgin's association with Christ's mission reaches its culmination in Jerusalem, at the time of the Redeemer's Passion and Death. As the Fourth Gospel testifies, she was in the Holy City at the time, probably for the celebration of the Jewish feast of Passover. The Council stresses the profound dimension of the Blessed Virgin's presence on Calvary, recalling that she "faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58), and points out that this union "in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to His death" (ibid., n. 57).

### MARY JOINS HER SUFFERING TO HIS PRIESTLY SACRIFICE

With our gaze illumined by the radiance of the Resurrection, we pause to reflect on the Mother's involvement in her Son's redeeming Passion, which was completed by her sharing in His suffering. Let us return again, but now

in the perspective of the Resurrection, to the foot of the Cross where the Mother endured "with her only-begotten Son the intensity of His suffering, associated herself with His sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which was born of her" (ibid., n. 58). With these words, the Council reminds us of "Mary's compassion." In her heart reverberates all that Jesus suffers in body and soul, emphasizing her willingness to share in her Son's redeeming sacrifice and to join her own maternal suffering to His priestly offering.

The Council text also stresses that her consent to Jesus' immolation is not passive acceptance but a genuine act of love, by which she offers her Son as a "victim" of expiation for the sins of all humanity. Lastly, *Lumen gentium* relates the Blessed Virgin to Christ, who has the lead role in Redemption, making it clear that in associating herself "with His sacrifice" she remains subordinate to her divine Son. In the Fourth Gospel, St. John says that "standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (19:25). By using the verb "to stand," which literally means "to be on one's feet," "to stand erect," perhaps the Evangelist intends to present the dignity and strength shown in their sorrow by Mary and the other women. The Blessed Virgin's "standing erect" at the foot of the Cross recalls her unflinching constancy and extraordinary cour-

age in facing suffering. In the tragic events of Calvary, Mary is sustained by faith, strengthened during the events of her life and especially during Jesus' public life.

The Council recalls that "the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58). Sharing his deepest feelings, she counters the arrogant insults addressed to the crucified Messiah with forbearance and pardon, associating herself with His prayer to the Father: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). By sharing in the feeling of abandonment to the Father's will expressed in Jesus' last words on the Cross: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit!" (ibid., 23:46), she thus offers, as the Council notes, loving consent "to the immolation of this victim which was born of her" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58).

### MARY'S HOPE IS STRONGER THAN DARKNESS

Mary's supreme "yes" is radiant with trusting hope in the mysterious future, begun with the death of her crucified Son. The words in which Jesus taught the disciples on His way to Jerusalem "that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days



“The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58)



rise again” re-echo in her heart at the dramatic hour of Calvary, awakening expectation of and yearning for the Resurrection. Mary’s hope at the foot of the Cross contains a light stronger than the darkness that reigns in many hearts: in the presence of the redeeming Sacrifice, the hope of the Church and of humanity is born in Mary.

## MARY’S UNIQUE CO-OPERATION

Down the centuries the Church has reflected on Mary’s co-operation in

the work of salvation, deepening the analysis of her association with Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. St. Augustine already gave the Blessed Virgin the title “co-operator” in the Redemption (cf. *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399), a title which emphasizes Mary’s joint but subordinate action with Christ the Redeemer. Reflection has developed along these lines, particularly since the 15th century. Some feared there might be a desire to put Mary on the same level as Christ. Actually the Church’s teaching makes a clear distinction between the Mother and the Son in the work of salvation, explain-

ing the Blessed Virgin’s subordination, as co-operator, to the one Redeemer. Moreover, when the Apostle Paul says: “For we are God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9), he maintains the real possibility for man to co-operate with God. The collaboration of believers, which obviously excludes any equality with Him, is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in their personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts. However, applied to Mary, the term “co-operator” acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits

they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation embraces the whole of Christ’s saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to Him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity. The Blessed Virgin’s role as co-operator has its source in her divine motherhood. By giving birth to the One who was destined to achieve man’s redemption, by nourishing Him, presenting Him in the temple and suffering with Him as He died on the Cross, “in a wholly singular way she co-operated ... in the work of the Savior” (Lumen gentium, n. 61). Although God’s call to co-operate in the work of salvation concerns every human being, the participation of the Savior’s Mother in humanity’s Redemption is a unique and unrepeatable fact. Despite the uniqueness of her condition, Mary is also the recipient of salvation. She is the first to be saved, redeemed by Christ “in the most sublime way” in her Immaculate Conception (cf. Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, in Pius IX, Acta, 1, 605) and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. This assertion now leads to the question: what is the meaning of Mary’s unique co-operation in the plan of salvation? It should be sought in God’s particular intention for the Mother of the Redeemer, whom on two solemn occasions, that is, at Cana and beneath the Cross, Jesus addresses as “Woman” (cf. Jn 2, 4; 19, 26). Mary is associated as a woman in the work of salvation. Having created man “male and female” (cf. Gn 1:27), the Lord also wants to place the New Eve beside the New Adam in the Redemption. Our first parents had chosen the way of sin as a couple; a new pair, the Son of God with his Mother’s co-operation, would re-establish the human race in its original dignity. Mary, the New Eve,

thus becomes a perfect icon of the Church. In the divine plan, at the foot of the Cross, she represents redeemed humanity which, in need of salvation, is enabled to make a contribution to the unfolding of the saving work.

## MARY IS OUR MOTHER

The Council had this doctrine in mind and made it its own, stressing the Blessed Virgin’s contribution not only to the Redeemer’s birth, but also to the life of his Mystical Body down the ages until the “eschaton”: in the Church Mary “has co-operated” (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 63) and “co-operates” (cf. *ibid.*, n. 53) in the work of salvation. In describing the mystery of the Annunciation, the Council states that the Virgin of Nazareth, “committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God’s saving will, devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of Redemption by the grace of Almighty God” (*ibid.*, n. 56). The Second Vatican Council moreover presents Mary not only as “Mother of the divine Redeemer,” but also “in a singular way [as] the generous associate,” who “co-operated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior.” The Council also recalls that the sublime fruit of this cooperation is her universal motherhood: “For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace” (*ibid.*, n. 61). We can therefore turn to the Blessed Virgin, trustfully imploring her aid in the awareness of the singular role entrusted to her by God, the role of co-operator in the Redemption, which she exercised throughout her life and in a special way at the foot of the Cross.

Pope St. John Paul II  
Excerpts from the General Audiences of April 2 and 9, 1997.

“  
Mary co-operated in the work of salvation during the Calvary event itself and in her role of mother.”

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# THE WORD OF GOD, THE EUCHARIST, LECTIO DIVINA AND CHARITY

BY POPE BENEDICT XVI



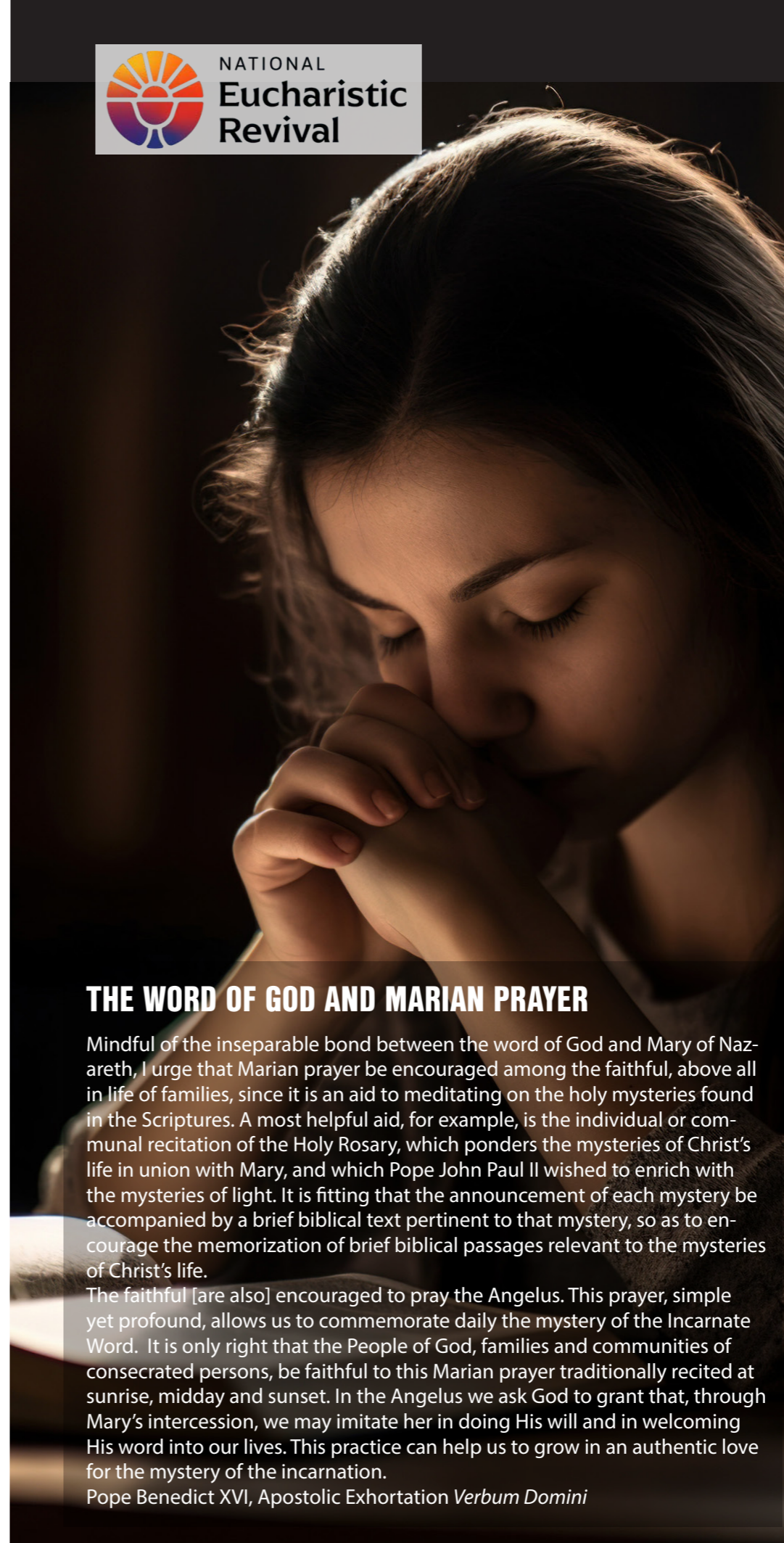
**The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist.**

**T**he mystery of the Eucharist reveals the true manna, the true bread of heaven: it is God's Logos [Word] made flesh, who gave Himself up for us in the paschal mystery. Luke's account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus enables us to reflect on this link between the hearing of the word and the breaking of the bread (cf. Lk 24:13-35). Jesus approached the disciples on the day after the Sabbath, listened as they spoke of their dashed hopes, and, joining them on their journey, "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:27). The two disciples began to look at the Scriptures in a new way in the company of this traveler who seemed so surprisingly familiar with their lives. What had taken place in those days no longer appeared to them as failure, but as fulfillment and a new beginning. And yet, apparently not even these words were enough for the two disciples. The Gospel of Luke relates that "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (24:31) only when Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, whereas earlier "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (24:16). The presence of Jesus, first with His words and then with the act of breaking bread, made it possible for the disciples to recognize Him. Now they were able to

appreciate in a new way all that they had previously experienced with him: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (24:32). From these accounts it is clear that Scripture itself points us towards an appreciation of its own unbreakable bond with the Eucharist. Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist. Unless we acknowledge the Lord's real presence in the Eucharist, our understanding of Scripture remains imperfect. Lord and through the sacraments."

## ENCOUNTERING THE WORD OF GOD IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

**I**f it is true that the liturgy is the privileged place for the proclamation, hearing and celebration of the word of God, it is likewise the case that this encounter must be prepared in the hearts of the faithful and then deepened and assimilated, above all by them. The Christian life is essentially marked by an encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls us to follow Him. For this reason, I express my heartfelt hope for the flowering of a new season of greater love for sacred Scripture on the part of every member of the People of God, so that their prayerful and faith-filled reading of the Bible will, with time, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus. Throughout the history of the Church, numerous saints have spoken of the need for knowledge of Scripture in order to grow in love for Christ. This is evident particu-



## THE WORD OF GOD AND MARIAN PRAYER

Mindful of the inseparable bond between the word of God and Mary of Nazareth, I urge that Marian prayer be encouraged among the faithful, above all in life of families, since it is an aid to meditating on the holy mysteries found in the Scriptures. A most helpful aid, for example, is the individual or communal recitation of the Holy Rosary, which ponders the mysteries of Christ's life in union with Mary, and which Pope John Paul II wished to enrich with the mysteries of light. It is fitting that the announcement of each mystery be accompanied by a brief biblical text pertinent to that mystery, so as to encourage the memorization of brief biblical passages relevant to the mysteries of Christ's life.

The faithful [are also] encouraged to pray the Angelus. This prayer, simple yet profound, allows us to commemorate daily the mystery of the Incarnate Word. It is only right that the People of God, families and communities of consecrated persons, be faithful to this Marian prayer traditionally recited at sunrise, midday and sunset. In the Angelus we ask God to grant that, through Mary's intercession, we may imitate her in doing His will and in welcoming His word into our lives. This practice can help us to grow in an authentic love for the mystery of the incarnation.

Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*

larly in the Fathers of the Church. Saint Jerome, in his great love for the word of God, often wondered: "How could one live without the knowledge of Scripture, by which we come to know Christ himself, who is the life of believers?" He knew well that the Bible is the means "by which God speaks daily to believers." His advice to the Roman matron Leta about raising her daughter was this: "Be sure that she studies a passage of Scripture each day... Prayer should follow reading, and reading follow prayer... so that in the place of jewelry and silk, she may love the divine books." Jerome's counsel to the priest Nepotian can also be applied to us: "Read the divine Scriptures frequently; indeed, the sacred book should never be out of your hands. Learn there what you must teach." Let us follow the example of this great saint who devoted his life to the study of the Bible and who gave the Church its Latin translation, the Vulgate, as well as the example of all those saints who made an encounter with Christ the center of their spiritual lives. Let us renew our efforts to understand deeply the word which God has given to his Church: thus we can aim for that "high standard of ordinary Christian living" proposed by Pope John Paul II at the beginning of the third Christian millennium, which finds constant nourishment in attentively hearing the word of God. In giving himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him. He does not discover this meaning at his own human level, but at the level of the suffering of Christ. At the same time, however, from this level of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering *descends to man's level* and becomes, in a sense, the individual's personal response. It is then that man finds in his suffering, interior peace and even spiritual joy." (SD 26)

(Continues on page 9)



In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus points out that “the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the Kingdom” (13:38). These words apply especially to the Christian laity, who live out their specific vocation to holiness by a life in the Spirit expressed in a particular way by their engagement in temporal matters and by their participation in earthly activities. The laity need to be trained to discern God’s will through a familiarity with His word, read and studied in the Church under the guidance of her legitimate pastors. They can receive this training at the school of the great ecclesial spiritualities, all of which are grounded in sacred Scripture.

## PRACTICING LECTIO DIVINA

**T**he word of God is at the basis of all authentic Christian spirituality. “Let the faithful go gladly to the sacred text itself, whether in the sacred liturgy, which is full of the divine words, or in devout reading, or in such suitable exercises and various other helps which, with the approval and guidance of the pastors of the Church, are happily spreading everywhere in our day. Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture.” [Dei Verbum, 25] The Council thus sought to

“ The Latin words ‘Lectio divina’ may be translated as ‘divine reading.’ Lectio divina is an ancient yet ever new method for daily prayer with the Scriptures.”

reappropriate the great patristic tradition which had always recommended approaching the Scripture in dialogue with God. As Saint Augustine puts it: “Your prayer is the word you speak to God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.” Origen, one of the great masters of this way of reading the Bible, maintains that understanding Scripture demands, even more than study, closeness to Christ and prayer. Origen was convinced, in fact, that the best way to know God is through love, and that there can be no authentic scientia Christi apart from growth in his love. In his Letter to Gregory, the great Alexandrian theologian gave this

advice: “Devote yourself to the lectio of the divine Scriptures; apply yourself to this with perseverance. Do your reading with the intent of believing in and pleasing God. If during the lectio you encounter a closed door, knock and it will be opened to you by that guardian of whom Jesus said, ‘The gatekeeper will open it for him.’ By applying yourself in this way to lectio divina, search diligently and with unshakable trust in God for the meaning of the divine Scriptures, which is hidden in great fullness within. You ought not, however, to be satisfied merely with knocking and seeking: to understand the things of God, what is absolutely necessary is oratio. For this reason, the Savior told us not only: ‘Seek and you will find,’ and ‘Knock and it shall be opened to you,’ but also added, ‘Ask and you shall receive.’” In this regard, however, one must avoid the risk of an individualistic approach, and remember that God’s word is given to us precisely to build communion, to unite us in the Truth along our path to God. While it is a word addressed to each of us personally, it is also a word which builds community, which builds the Church. Consequently, the sacred text must always be approached in the communion of the Church. The privileged place for the prayerful reading of sacred Scripture is the liturgy, and particularly the Eucharist, in which, as we celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ in the sacrament, the word itself is present and at work in our midst. In some sense, the prayerful reading of the Bible, personal and communal, must always be related to the Eucharistic celebration. Just as the adoration of the Eucharist prepares for, accompanies and follows the liturgy of the Eucharist, so too prayerful reading, personal and communal, prepares for, accompanies and deepens what the Church celebrates when she proclaims the word in a liturgical setting.

\*Excerpts from the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* of Pope Benedict XVI, September 30, 2010.

## HOW TO PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA

*Lectio divina* is truly capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God. I would like here to review the basic steps of this procedure.

- It opens with the reading (*lectio*) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: what does the biblical text say in itself? Without this, there is always a risk that the text will become a pretext for never moving beyond our own ideas.
- Next comes meditation (*meditatio*), which asks: what does the biblical text say to us? Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community, must let himself or herself be moved and challenged.
- Following this comes prayer (*oratio*), which asks the question: what do we say to the Lord in response to His word? Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us.
- Finally, lectio divina concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, His own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves: what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us? In the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul tells us: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (12:2). Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). The word of God appears here as a criterion for discernment: it is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). - We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.

We find the supreme synthesis and fulfilment of this process in the Mother of God. For every member of the faithful Mary is the model of docile acceptance of God’s word, for she “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51); she discovered the profound bond which unites, in God’s great plan, apparently disparate events, actions and things.

Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*



## Eucharistic Revival Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to stay with us always, until the end of the age.

Reawaken our wonder at His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist.

May our hearts burn within us as He opens the Scriptures and breaks the Bread.

Give us the eyes of faith to recognize His presence in our brothers and sisters, especially in the face of the poor and the suffering.

Nourished by the Eucharist, send us forth to walk faithfully as missionary disciples, proclaiming the Gospel to every heart and extending Your kingdom to every land.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

by Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles





# CELEBRATING ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE



Not even a few raindrops could dampen the spirits of the 50 Militia of the Immaculata members and neighbors who gathered to celebrate the feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe on Sunday, August 13 at the Little Garden of the Immaculata in Peoria, IL. A highlight of the celebration was the dedication of a new garden and a refurbished statue of our Lady in the backyard of the home of the MI National Center—USA. Fr. Bill Miller, an MI member, and a priest of the Diocese of Peoria, led the Prayer Service, the renewal of Consecration to the Immaculata and blessing of the statue and new garden area. Following the service, Antonella Di Piazza, a Fr. Kolbe Missionary of the Immaculata, and the coordinator of the MI National Center, shared that she hoped the new garden area for Mary would provide a quiet place in the center of town for MI members and neighbors to visit our Blessed

Mother and enjoy the beauty of the garden flowers. She publicly thanked several people instrumental in creating and constructing the new garden. Sue Shingle planted the flowers and mulched the garden area. Bob Kucner and Jim Nedza engineered the paved walkway. Other helpers included: Pat Nedza, Jeff Hoerdemann, Brian Stear, Terry Davis, Kay Robison, Deacon Fred and Gail Kruse, Nancy and Brian White, Ron and Inmaculada Rodrigues, and the Kucner girls. Before the garden dedication, MI members joined parishioners of Sacred Heart Church in downtown Peoria for a 10:00 am Mass on the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time. It was concelebrated by Fr. Bill Miller and fellow MI member, Fr. Stephen Boyle, a Norbertine priest of the new Corpus Christi Priory in Springfield, IL. After Mass was a luncheon in the parish hall for the MI members and a presentation by Ron Rodrigues, the MI National President. Ron shared a fasci-

“What a wonderful day of joyful celebration with fellow MI members and friends!”  
(A participant)

nating story of his conversion to Catholicism, his attraction to Mary, and how he became a soldier in Mary’s Militia after learning about St. Maximilian Kolbe. Ron became Catholic in order to marry his beloved Inmaculada whom he met in London, but traveled to Spain to marry. He admitted he was not a great Catholic initially, but caught fire after studying the faith for two years. His attraction to Mary began after he read *33 Days to Morning Glory* by Fr. Michael Gaitley. He consecrated to Mary through that program and his love for Mary has grown and intensified over several years. His introduction to the Militia of the Immaculata was accidental. Once he discovered St. Maximilian Kolbe’s program of being a soldier for Mary’s Militia, he was hooked. He had made the military his career and he understood clearly what it meant to be a soldier and to follow orders. He also shared that he was a Catholic and had been a Mason at the

same time. He described a time in the Church in the 1970s when some Church leaders stated that a person could be a Catholic and a Mason simultaneously. Learning more about St. Maximilian and his battle against the Masons which began the MI movement, Ron resigned from the Masonic order. He then spent six months working with a priest exorcist to break the spell and curses he had uttered in order to become a Mason. Ron concluded his presentation by encouraging those present to follow our Lord Jesus’ command to: “Enter through the narrow gate. The road that leads to damnation is wide, the road is clear and many choose to follow it. But how narrow is the gate that leads to life, how rough the road, and how few there are who find it.” (Matthew 13: 14-15).

John Wikoff  
MI Village Moderator  
School of Mary at the Little Garden,  
Peoria, IL



# CREATING OUR LADY'S GARDEN AT THE MI NATIONAL CENTER



## THE NATIVITY OF MARY

(CONTINUED FROM PG. 2)

Other areas shower flowers on the statue of the Virgin Mary. In Mumbai, they have a week-long feast called *Bandra Fair*.

In Malta, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary is celebrated as *Victory Day* since the day coincides with three major victories in Malta's history. The day is a national holiday to honor both its religious and historical importance. In 1730, a devotion to Mary as a baby began among the Franciscan nuns in Lovere, Italy, and in southern France the baby Mary became a bride gift at weddings to represent children and fertility as an ideal wish for a new bride.

Many devotions to Mary as a child appeared in the 17th century in Spain and the Spanish territories, Mexico, Guatemala, and the Philippines. In the Philippines, they adopted a devotion

to the toddler Virgin, dressing her with pastel colors and crowning her with flowers to emphasize her virginity and innocence. Cakes and candy are offered to her, calling her *La Dulce Maria* or the sweet Mary. On December 27, 2018, the House of Representatives of the Philippines officially approved a bill in honor of the Virgin Mary's Birthday, making September 8th a working holiday.

On August 13, 2019, President Rodrigo Duterte signed the Republic Act 11370, a law declaring September 8th a special working holiday for the entire country to commemorate the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Birthday celebrations bring happiness to all who participate. When we celebrate our Mother's Birthday, we have the opportunity to show our love

and remember her in special way. The only other one whose birth brings more happiness to the world is Jesus. Mary's birth brings the world the joy and happiness we all need. When we celebrate her birth, we can hope for an increase of peace in our hearts and the world.

Mary teaches us to experience the joy of Christ and to share it with others as St. Maximilian did so well, and never let adversity beat us down but always help those in need with love and mercy.

On this special day, let us renew our consecration and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Ronald L. Rodrigues  
MI National President  
"I see Mary everywhere and difficulties nowhere." -St. Maximilian Kolbe



# ST. MAXIMILIAN WRITES...

EXCERPTS FROM A TEXT ADDRESSED TO HIS FRANCISCAN BROTHERS AND PUBLISHED IN 1938 IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES (POLISH, LATIN, FRENCH, ENGLISH, GERMAN), WITH VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL CONTENTS (KW 1226).

The aim of the Militia of the Immaculata is “to engage in the work of conversion of sinners, heretics, schismatics, and so on, but most of all of Freemasons, and in the work of sanctification of all, under the protection and through mediation of the Immaculata.” Its purpose, therefore, is commitment for the conversion of sinners and of non-Catholics, and for the sanctification of all. In other words, love toward all people, regardless of differences of faith and nationality, with a view to drawing them closer to the happiness that only closeness to God, the source of all happiness, and concrete love for God, that is, sanctification, can afford. And all that under the protection and through the mediation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate. We all know well that the Virgin Immaculate was

established by God Mediatrix of all graces. In fact, no one converts or is sanctified without the grace of God, for it is the grace of God that brings about conversion and sanctification, provided that the soul wishes to collaborate with such grace. For this reason, therefore, one can speak neither of conversion nor of sanctification without the help of the Immaculata, the Mother of divine grace. Indeed, the closer one comes to this Dispenser of divine graces, the more graces one obtains, the more easily one is made holy and contributes to the sanctification of others. It is logical, then, that we should be committed to the work of conversion and sanctification of souls under the protection and through the mediation of the Immaculata. But what are the conditions for enrolling in the MI? (MI is the international abbreviation of the Militia

“**The mere thought that many a soul is still unaware even of the name of Mary will give MI Knights no peace. They long to conquer the entire world to her.**”

of the Immaculata, in Latin, “Militia Immaculatae”.) Those who wish to make their own contribution to the work of the sanctification of others must begin, of course, with themselves. They themselves, therefore, must draw closer and closer to the Immaculata, in order to obtain from her the graces that may help them love God ever more perfectly and practically in every moment of their daily life. The most perfect form of approach is total self-oblation, the consecration of oneself as her possession and property. Therefore, the first and essential condition for membership in the Militia of the Immaculata is the total consecration of oneself to the Immaculata. Such consecration does not require at all that one abandon at the same time the world and one’s family and enter religious life. Not at all! We may peacefully continue to

engage in all the lawful business we have committed ourselves to, except that we will not be giving up all our daily cares to God on our own but through her, the Immaculata, of whom we have become the property. Mary will then offer Him all these activities, flawed and full of imperfections as they may be, not as if they were our own but as her own personal property. For we, with all that is ours, belong to her. Consequently, each of our activities belongs to her. The Immaculata, however, cannot possibly offer God anything that is stained by sin. Thus, in her immaculate hands, our own imperfect actions are made pure as well, without stain, and therefore incomparably more valuable.... Not only that, but experiencing how much sweetness in life comes from closeness to the Immaculata, how much energy against temptations,

and how much comfort in difficulties, they shall endeavor to share their own happiness with those who live around them, and will do everything they can to make them approach the Immaculata as well, in order to win their hearts over to her. They will in a sense strive to become her true knights. The mere thought that many a soul is still unaware even of the name of Mary will give them no peace. They long to conquer the entire world to her, to introduce the Immaculata in every heart that beats, and will ever beat under the sun, so that she might enlighten those hearts with an abundance of grace, warm them with the love of her motherly Heart, and kindle them with the fire of love toward God, toward the Divine Heart of Jesus. They realize, however, that they could not possibly undertake such a huge task alone. They understand that the Immaculata herself must act in them and through them among the people who live around them. Thus, they offer themselves even more perfectly to the Immaculata as property, as a docile instrument in her immaculate hands. Consequently, the first and most essential condition is “to give oneself up completely to the Immaculata as an instrument in her immaculate hands.” There is also a second condition, namely to wear the Miraculous Medal. This is not a prerequisite. Yet, in a way it stands as the outer sign of one’s unreserved inner self-oblation to the Immaculata. This medal is commonly called miraculous, as it has, indeed, worked countless conversions. It pleases the Immaculata to never cease showering copious and various graces upon those who wear it on their chest with devotion.

*A Maximilianus M. Villa*





# “BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER!”

## A REFLECTION AS WE APPROACH THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROW

BY MOST REV. DONALD J. HYING, BISHOP OF MADISON

“When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there whom He loved, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” (Jn 19: 25-27) In one of the most moving moments of the Passion, Jesus hands His mother over to the care of Saint John and entrusts the beloved disciple to the maternal love of Mary. In this entrustment, we have all become children of the Mother of God. Only twice in John’s Gospel does Jesus directly address His mother, once at the wedding at Cana and in the above scene at the foot of the Cross. In both instances, He calls her “Woman.” This may sound disrespectful to our modern ears. Do not go home and call your mother “Woman.” Clearly, the Lord is making a theological point here. Mary is not simply a woman, but rather, she is THE woman, the new Eve whose obedient fiat cancels out the first Eve’s sinful disobedience. She is the woman of the apocalypse, appearing in the heavens, clothed with the sun, crowned with stars. She is the woman, promised by God in His dialogue with the serpent in Genesis Chapter 3, whose Son will crush the head of the serpent and destroy the power of evil and death. The early Church Fathers called this mysterious prophecy the *protoevangelium* or the “pre-Gospel,” as God already promises ultimate salvation in Jesus Christ, even as the immediate repercussions of the Original Sin begin to ripple out. *In Mary, we see the perfection of God’s plan for us.* She is the Lord’s masterpiece, sinless from the first moment of her conception, chosen by God to bring His Son into the world, giving Jesus His humanity, deeply sharing in the mystery of our salvation. In a masterpiece, we perceive the genius of the artist. Think of the *Pieta’* by Michelangelo or the Last Supper by Da Vinci. These classic works of

“**Bloodied, scourged, crowned with thorns, stripped of everything including His garments, Jesus gives His mother to us.”**

genius reveal the mind, heart, and imagination of the artist whose efforts bring a creation of beauty, truth, and goodness into being. Just so, in the Blessed Virgin Mary, we perceive God’s original intention for all of us: holiness, freedom from sin and death, complete obedience to God, humility and joy, union with the Lord for all eternity. Bloodied, scourged, crowned with thorns, stripped of everything including His garments, Jesus gives His mother to us in the last moments of His earthly life. How consoling to know that Mary is truly our spiritual mother. In our status as adopted children of the Father, she loves us as her own, praying for us, interceding for us with her Son, encouraging us to follow her example of discipleship and

service. Every Catholic needs a robust Marian devotion to live an integral spirituality. Observing First Saturdays, praying the Rosary daily, celebrating the many Marian feasts throughout the year, making a personal consecration to the Blessed Mother, and imitating her virtues of faith, humility, and trust are concrete ways which bring us into a deep and loving relationship with the Mother of God, making all of us better Christians and true servants of the Gospel. Recently, I received a copy of the Family Rosary Book, which my family regularly used, as we prayed the Rosary every night after supper. Seeing it for the first time in decades brought back a flood of memories. We would place the book, with a full-page artistic depiction of each Mystery, on the coffee table, taking turns leading the decades and turning the pages. Those particular pictures are emblazoned in my mind, because I saw them every single day of my childhood. When I think of those events in the life of Jesus and Mary, I see those pictures. The Rosary is a profound way to ponder the Gospel and to learn the essentials of our Christian faith. In the Scriptures, so often we read that, after some profound moment shared with our Lord, Mary took the time to ponder, treasure, and store those experiences. When we pray the Rosary, we are asking Mary to open the treasure house of her heart and share with us her living memories of Jesus. What hope and peace we can draw by developing and deepening our filial relationship with our heavenly Mother. She teaches us the Gospel, exemplifies the Christian virtues, models discipleship and leads us to Jesus. Like any good mother, she cares for us, loves us, worries for our salvation, and prays for us, especially when we go astray. As we meditate on Jesus’ last words from the Cross, personally I find this entrustment of us to His holy Mother profoundly moving and generous. Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us!





This year, the monthly reflections provided by the MI International Office on the 2023 MI Intentions include:

- \*A Scripture reading.
- \*A text from St. Maximilian Kolbe's Writings.
- \*A brief commentary by Fr. Sidifredo De La Cruz, OFM Conv., Colombia.

## September

*O Immaculata, please intercede...*

*That the Word that reveals the face of the Lord may transform us and help us to live by echoing His voice in our time.*

**Heb 4:12** - Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

**KW 964** - Listen peacefully and do not hesitate to put into effect the teaching you acquired in Holy Scripture....

Be loyal in small things, because neglecting them (failing to observe them), or putting them into effect without care, leads to coldness, which is nearly impossible to recover from.

Pay no heed to the judgment of men, since they can do nothing to us, either for good or bad, unless God permits it or grants it through the hands of the Immaculata.

**Reflection** - "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ," stated St. Jerome. Holy Scripture ought to be the living source of the spiritual life of each MI Knight, for constant reading and meditation of God's word sustain the soul on the journey of faith.

The MI is to be a school where we learn personally and communally from the Immaculata to listen attentively and to put into practice faithfully the word of God, and thus to echo her *Fiat* to God's will. Let us learn to meditate and pray with the word of God.

In the MI Prayer Book *Glory to God Through the Immaculata!* (pp. 35-36), you may find a guide for *Lectio Divina*, a tried path practiced by saints and endorsed by the Church.

Familiarity with the divine word should characterize our life as we consecrate ourselves to Our Lady and strive to imitate her generous discipleship and thus be fruitful instruments in her hands.

**Prayer** - Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata.

## Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata

(Prayer composed by St. Maximilian Kolbe)

O Immaculata, Queen of Heaven and earth, refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to you. I, (name), a repentant sinner, cast myself at your feet humbly imploring you to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to yourself as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases you.

If it pleases you, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what was said of you: "She will crush your head," and, "You alone have destroyed all heresies in the world."

Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for introducing and increasing your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls, and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed Kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For wherever you enter, you obtain the grace of conversion and growth in holiness, since it is through your hands that all graces come to us from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

V. Allow me to praise you, O sacred Virgin.

R. Give me strength against your enemies.

## MI Resources

Available from the MI National Center



Disseminate the Miraculous Medal and introduce Our Lady and the MI to others!

Miraculous Medals and various MI resources can be requested from the MI National Office

via email: [MINational@MissionImmaculata.com](mailto:MINational@MissionImmaculata.com)



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Check the MI website [MilitiaoftheImmaculata.com](http://MilitiaoftheImmaculata.com) often for updates and follow us on



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*"Through Mary Immaculate to Jesus: that is our watchword. The more you spread veneration and love for the Immaculata the more souls you win over to her, and, through her, to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, who loved us unto death on the Cross."*

- St. Maximilian Kolbe



Want to connect and pray with other MI members? Looking for support in deepening or preparing for your consecration? Join an MI Village and live out your consecration with others. For information about an MI Village in your area, email the MI National Center. For *online MI Villages*, email the Moderators listed below.

\*\*Moderator: Scott Richard

Email: [Virtual.MI.Village@gmail.com](mailto:Virtual.MI.Village@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Friday (Last Friday of each month)

Mtg Time: 8:00pm CST

Weekly Consecration Renewal & Virtual

Village Rosary Tuesdays @ 8:30pm CST

\*\*Moderator: Douglas Eschbach

Email: [MI.village.marytown@gmail.com](mailto:MI.village.marytown@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Sunday (3rd Sunday of each month)

Mtg Time: 5:00pm CST

\*\*Moderator: Donna

Knights at the Foot of the Cross (KFC)

Village of the Immaculata

E-mail: [miutah.stmary@gmail.com](mailto:miutah.stmary@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Every Friday evening

Mtg Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm MST

\*\*Moderator: Bill Bielawski

Email: [william.bielawski@gmail.com](mailto:william.bielawski@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Sunday (3rd Sunday of each month)

Mtg Time: 7:00pm CST

\*\*Moderator: Lisa Fulgenzi

Email: [drlisafmi@gmail.com](mailto:drlisafmi@gmail.com)

Write to request Google Meet join info

Mtg Day: Wednesdays

Mtg Time: 8-00-9:00pm EST