



The Virgin **Mary**
at the French Church
du Saint-Esprit

May 2024

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*To our mothers,
of blood and heart*

Preface by the Rector

May is traditionally known as "Mary's month" in many Christian denominations, including the Anglican and Episcopal churches. This month is set apart to recall Mary's unique role in Christian history as the mother of our Savior and model of our faith. Mary's specific association with the month of May has an interesting history. In illuminated Bibles from the Middle Ages, Mary is often surrounded by the flowers and fruit of the strawberry plant. Her white flowers symbolize virginity, while her red fruits refer to Christ's redeeming love. In the northern hemisphere, May is the season when flowers bloom and life returns, a fitting time of year to celebrate the woman who brought new life into the world by giving birth to Jesus, our Savior. These prayers, hymns and devotions revolving around Mary have a particularly important environmental aspect for our times.

Mary not only embodies a certain fruitfulness and fertility; through her obedience and pursuit of justice she is also an example of Christian faith. These qualities are illustrated in the *Magnificat*, the song she sang when she visited her relative Elizabeth in Judean hill country. The world needs the justice and peace that Mary exemplified throughout her life. Mary was no stranger to suffering, not only her own personal suffering, but also the suffering of the world. This is not a sentimental or romantic notion. The world is going through dangerous times, just as it did in Mary's day, and this month has a long tradition of Christian celebrations centered on Mary and her son Jesus. It is a month where we pray with Mary for peace in the world. Like Mary, we pray that the mighty may be humbled, and that the humbled and humiliated may be exalted.

Dedicating the month of May to Mary is a way of honoring the unique role she has played in our salvation history. As you will discover in this little booklet that Joris has prepared with such care and love, Mary, like no other saint in our calendar, leads us to Jesus in a profoundly moving and unique way. I hope that as we explore her life together, we will find new ways of praying to and praising God, but above all that our love for her son Jesus will be deepened and renewed.

The Rev. Nigel Massey

Rector of the French Church du Saint-Esprit

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The Virgin Mary at Saint-Esprit

Lord Jesus, you have proclaimed blessed those who hear your word and keep it. Bless this statue of the Virgin Mary and those who venerate it, so that, following the example of your Mother, they may welcome your word and meditate on it in their hearts, in honor and glory of your Name. Amen.

In 2020, on the fourth Sunday of Advent traditionally dedicated to the Virgin Mary when the church was mainly accessible online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this little prayer was prayed in the French Church of the Holy Spirit as we dedicated a statue of Mary, Mother of God, for the veneration of the faithful.

A statue of Mary in a church founded by French Protestants? It's quite astonishing and may even raise some questions! Indeed, faced with the excesses of Marian devotion that sometimes tended to make Mary the equal of God, or to obscure the fact that it is God who is the initiator of our salvation, many of the Protestant Reformers of the 16th century challenged or sought to reform the place that had been given to Mary in the devotion of the faithful and the rites of the Church. In particular, the Reformers noted that in the Scriptures, Mary is distinguished by her humility and discretion. She never seeks to be adored or to draw attention to herself, but instead always directs God's children to the Son to whom she gave birth. Today, thanks to the progress of an ecumenism that enables different Christian traditions to better understand each other's history and to discover each other, we are also beginning to realize that, despite polemics and aberrations on all sides, the Church is perhaps more in agreement on Mary's role than is often thought¹. While Catholics and Orthodox share more "visible" Marian devotions than many Protestants, Mary is nonetheless recognized in these traditions as the first of the faithful of the New Covenant, the one who, by saying "yes" to God, ushered humanity into a new era.

It's often said that we venerate Mary but worship God. Traditionally, the Church distinguishes between adoration (*latria*) reserved for God and veneration (*dulia*) addressed to the saints. Among them, as Mother of God, the Virgin Mary is honored with special veneration (*hyperdulia*). The more Protestant among us may rightly wonder whether "veneration" does not

¹ On this subject, read the joint "Seattle Declaration" published by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission entitled "Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ", available in English on the Anglican Communion website: https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105263/mary-grace-and-hope-in-christ_english.pdf

"risk" becoming idolatry. Yet when we look at the original meaning of the word, something interesting emerges: to venerate (by lighting candles or asking for intercessions) means to respect or revere. It comes from an Indo-European root meaning to love and desire, and is also found in the English word *wonder*. This respect, love and reverence we show to the saints is therefore not essentially different from the commandment to love one's neighbor that Jesus entrusted to his disciples on the eve of his Passion. What's more, for those of us who belong to the people of the Risen One who has ascended to heaven, the death or disappearance of a friend, enemy or saint is surely no barrier to the love we must show them. It could even be said that we find ourselves even closer to God when, as in a close-knit family or group of friends, we love those who love him and those whom he loves. It is God's own love, the love he gives us and teaches us to give, that is the subject of all true veneration.

Of course, as an expression of respect and love, veneration can also take the form of prayers or requests for advice on how to move forward in God's way. Indeed, it's not uncommon for us to ask those whom we love to pray for us or give us advice. It's also not uncommon for those whom we love to ask us to pray for them or advise them. It's only natural, then, that as Christians we should ask our brothers and sisters in heaven to pray for us, or to share with us the enlightenment they receive from God, just as we do with each other on earth. One might even think that their prayers and advice will be all the more enlightening since, unlike us, they are not blinded by their passions and the fog of our very different mortal existence on earth.

This little booklet does not pretend to shed any light on the complex history of the various polemics, theologies and devotions surrounding Mary, which have spilled much ink in discussions about a woman whom the Scriptures describe as "the humble handmaid of the Lord". Unfortunately, in the centuries since the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, Mary has become the object of confessional identity and ideological struggles between antagonistic parties, far removed from the true veneration that should guide us in our love of neighbor and God. By vilifying or idealizing Mary, these polemics, which sometimes went as far as breaking statues or thanking the Virgin for victory over Christian brothers and sisters of another denomination, had very little to do with Mary herself; the young Jewish woman who in Judea gave birth to Jesus for the salvation of the world. It's worth noting that making such a woman, the Mother of God, an object of controversy (whether for or against) is certainly not an attitude that would please her son, who loves her dearly. Mary shares with many women the fate of being silenced, or rather crowded out by noise. Her voice, often heard in the loving silence of prayer, can make itself heard. That's what this little collection proposes.

Inspired by the Anglican tradition, which gives the faithful and congregations great freedom in matters of devotion, particularly Marian devotion, this little booklet aims to provide the curious reader with resources for exploring the role of the Virgin Mary in the new

life God is giving us. We hope that everyone will be able to hear Mary's prayerful voice or her silence. By meditating on the statue of Mary in the Holy Spirit, reading Sacred Scripture, texts from Christian and literary tradition inspired by her, or discovering Marian devotions from various Christian traditions, the reader will be able to come face to face with this woman whom God chose above all others, and "whom people in all ages will call blessed". (Luke 1:48)

At the French Church du Saint-Esprit, New York City

Feast of the Annunciation of our Lord, 2024

Joris Bürmann

Theologian in residence

Mary from the Congo to New York City

"Do whatever he tells you"

The discovery of a relic (of the Holy Cross, for example) or a saint's statue is often spoken of as an "invention". From the Latin *invenire*, meaning "to find", this word reminds us that in the history of Christian devotion, relics and statues have not always been carefully preserved. Many objects considered holy have also been buried or forgotten for several centuries before being rediscovered and liturgically offered for veneration by the faithful.

The arrival of our statue of Mary in Saint-Esprit is something of a contemporary "invention". The statue was brought back from the Congo by our sister Chantal Missamou. She recounts:

In 2012, I was visiting Congo-Brazzaville to promote my NGO Kongo Culture Synergy. I met a number of Congolese artists, notably the great sculptor B. Mouanga-Nkodia, who, deeply moved by the purpose of my visit and the bright future of Congolese culture beyond our borders, offered me this beautiful piece as a token of his thanks when he learned of the creation of my NGO. In giving it to me, he explained what had inspired him and that it represented womanhood in her sorrows. I thanked him and told him that, indeed, this statue reminded me of Mother Earth. Alone against all: even in her suffering, she carries her children, holds them close to her to protect us from all danger. It's our earth that sustains us despite her own wounds, bearing all the weight of our lives, and holding her children close to her to protect them, loving and guiding them. She moves aside to bring comfort to others! When he gave it to me, he simply added: "Put it to good use". When I returned from the Congo, I placed the statue in my living room in New York. As a Legionnaire de Marie [an association of lay Catholics], every time I looked at it, I was reminded of the sword that pierced the heart of Mary, the worthy mother of the Savior, during the passion of her Son Jesus Christ. As sadness overcame me, I put her in a corner so as not to see her so much. One day, when Guillaume, a brother of the Church was visiting me, I told him about this statue and he suggested that I place it in the church, as it represented the woman Mary who lives in all of us through her gentleness, her closeness and her obedience to her "destiny", which is none other than to say yes to God! At first, it was placed in the church for Afrique fête [the African festival of St. Esprit which takes place on a Sunday at the end of July], but I was delighted to see that we later adopted it to represent the woman Mary in our sanctuary at Saint-Esprit. As if by premonition, the sculptor's phrase "Take care of her" found its full meaning, for it is

Jesus himself who takes care of us and also took care of his gentle mother by bringing her here, as he also entrusted her on the Cross to his disciple John and to the church.

For several years, the statue was displayed in the Church at the end of July as one of the decorations for the African festival, "Afrique Fête", which we've been celebrating every year since 2006 at the initiative of our brother Guillaume. After spending a few weeks in our sanctuary with the rest of the decorations, the statuette returned to the church basement. But in 2020, it decided to stay with us², "forgotten", after all the decorations had been duly put away. Initially kept as a souvenir of Afrique Fête in the church emptied by the pandemic, this statue, representing a mother tenderly clasping a ten-year-old child and carrying an infant on her back, touched us with its very special aura. This was before we even knew that it had touched Chantal so deeply, and that it was she who had brought it back from the Congo after receiving it from her sculptor.

Perhaps it's not so surprising that this sculpture, in which Mary and her Son are depicted, should be revealed to us on a feast day, and an African feast at that. The Gospel of Matthew 2:13-23 tells us that Joseph, Mary and Jesus knew Africa personally, having stayed in Egypt as refugees when King Herod wanted to have all newborn babies killed. Some of the oldest Marian sanctuaries are to be found in Africa, such as the Church of St Mary of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia, founded in the 4th century AD. Africa is also the continent where mankind first appeared and where it has mainly developed: all the oldest human fossils are African.³ What's more, in John's Gospel 2:1-11, it is also during a festival, like Afrique fête, that Mary first appears and her Son performs his first miracle at a wedding in Cana. As the guests run out of wine, Mary realizes this and asks her Son to help them, then advises the servants to do "whatever [he] tells [them]". Mary appears for the first time in this Gospel in a festive context, to assist in the revelation of the "extraordinary sign" of the transformation of water into wine, which marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. By appearing at a feast where many "servants" were also busy, our image of Mary also invites us to enter further into the mysteries of her Son's glory.

² For modern, rationalist thinking, it may seem strange to attribute a will to an image such as this statue, but contemporary religious studies question this modern viewpoint, which tends to oppose animate subjects and inanimate objects in a binary fashion. By studying Mexican Catholic devotions, historian of religion Jennifer Hughes shows, for example, that sacred objects, "icons", can be perceived as having a "soul" or aura that gives them a certain autonomy within a community of the faithful. Cf. Jennifer Hughes, "Mysterium Materiae: Vital Matter and the Object as Evidence in the Study of Religion." *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2012, pp. 16-24.

³ "Introduction of Human Evolution," *Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History*. Page accessed 04/2024. <https://humanorigins.si.edu/education/introduction-human-evolution>.

Mother and Child

The reserved emotion that emanates from this statuette makes it captivating and owes much of this effect to the art and inspiration of the sculptor whose life and work is described by Congolese art historian Jean-Luc Aka-Evy in an article describing developments and Congolese sculpture in the 20th century⁴ :

It was Bernard Mouanga Nkodia, who graduated from Maître Étienne Giela's workshop in Ouenzé between 1957 and 1959, who bridged the gap between this trend [that of colonial-era sculpture] and the more independent trend heralded by the works of Rémy Mongo-Etsion and Nicolas Bissi in the late 1970s. In 1959, Mwanga-Nkodia was admitted to the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Saint-Luc in Léopoldville (Kinshasa), with a major in wood sculpture, where he spent four years learning the rules of the trade in an environment influenced by the "modernity" of the Belgian school.

This practical, essentially technical, training proved to be conducive to the work this artist began on his return to Brazzaville in 1964. His return to the right bank of the Congo River was particularly interesting, as he was hired by the Brazzaville forestry center as a teacher, sculptor and interior decorator. The varied, stylized translation of Mouanga-Nkodia's works was in no way hierarchical, even if tradition, in its range of local scenes, was respected.

With Mwanga Nkodia, you can sense and touch works to which he has given an inner life. Marked by a classical European tendency, he is strongly influenced by Rodin and Michelangelo. Rodin's graceful approach emanates from his works, while Michelangelo's expressive force of form is his own. Between these two opposing plastic forces, he has used his formal magic to transpose their perspectives. The result is a sculpture whose limpid, delicate forms satisfy the eye and stir the imagination. "Papa Mouanga", as he is affectionately known in Brazzaville cultural circles, is rightly considered one of Central Africa's greatest sculptors. His works are among the most appreciated and awarded at national and international exhibitions. Straddling the divide between the first trend in modern Congolese sculpture and the new trend, he bridges the gap between the two; he is a ferryman between the two styles.

Mouanga-Nkodia's style is beautifully expressed in our statue, where the "grace" and "expressive power" of the whole make us feel the presence of the "inner life" so characteristic of the Virgin Mary in the Gospels. In Luke's Gospel, we are told that after the visit of the Magi and the Shepherds, "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19 as well as 51). The woman's head bent towards the Child, and her closed eyes, express a tender

⁴ Jean-Luc Aka-Evy, "Considérations historiques sur les tendances actuelles de la sculpture congolaise moderne." *Présence Africaine*, no. 167/168, 2003, pp. 195-205.

love and deep contemplation, a relief, which is also seen on the face of the Child with closed eyes.

Much can also be said of this statue when we look at it and meditate on the life of Jesus, Mary and the destiny of the Church. In the Catholic and Orthodox iconographic tradition, Mary is rarely depicted alone, but always with her Son, to emphasize her role as Mother of God (*Theotokos*). Depicting Mary with Jesus also prevents any tendency to refer to her alone, as might have been the case with statues of pagan mother deities. Depicting Mary with Jesus also perfectly illustrates the beginning of the *Ave Maria*, the most famous Marian prayer in the West: "Hail Mary, full of grace, *the Lord is with thee...*". As Mary's greatest glory is to be the Mother of God, it is particularly touching to see that the Mother of our statue is also sculpted with two children, one in front, about ten years old, clutching her belly, and another behind, an infant, strapped to her back.

The composition of the sculpture, with its lines of force, also suggests a synergy between Mother and Child, recalling the mystery of the Incarnation in which God himself enters into a close relationship with his creatures via his holy Mother, Mary. Two shapes play an important role in this statue: the square and the sphere. Traditionally, these shapes also have symbolic value, the sphere representing heaven, infinity and divinity, while the square or cube represents the finite; earth and humanity. Their combination in this ensemble, in which we can see the manifestation of God's incarnate love in Jesus and the Virgin Mary, is therefore particularly eloquent. The Child's left forearm clinging to his Mother is parallel to his Mother's left forearm resting on his back, while the Child's left arm is parallel to his Mother's right forearm folded over his chest. The arrangement of their arms forms a square at the very level of the Mother's belly, at the heart of which rests the Child's round head. The hem of the Mother's garment also runs parallel to the hem of the Child's pants. The complementarity of these geometrical shapes formed by the two bodies manifests in wood the mystery of incarnation, of the finite meeting the infinite in Mary's womb. Many Marian hymns sing of this mystery, such as this one⁵ :

Mary conceived in her womb.

The Word, the faithful Seed

Whom the whole world cannot contain

Was carried in the Virgin's womb

⁵ Cf. *Agnoscat omne saeculum* in "Mary in Hymns", infra, p. 84. English translation from <https://app.neumz.com/listen/vesperas-i-agnoscat-omne-saeculum-8/24-03-2023>

In a posture found in the European Renaissance sculpture that influenced Mouanga-Nkodia, such as Michelangelo's, the Child is depicted with his body in *contraposto*, i.e. slightly swaying. The Mother, on the other hand, stands erect on her two feet. This contrast expresses the dynamism of the Child's love and the stability of the Mother's love. It reminds us that through the Incarnation, it is God who, in Jesus Christ, comes to humanity. It is God who comes to Mary, not Mary who seeks him out or makes him happen. It also reminds us of the dynamic love that Jesus Christ has for us, a love that also relies on our fidelity, our anchoring. The position of the feet of the two subjects is also particularly interesting for its contribution to the overall composition. The Child's left foot rests on the Mother's right foot. Without touching the ground, it rests as if in balance, a reminder of God's dependence, in Jesus, on Mary's humanity, and of the miracle and mystery of the Incarnation itself, in which the Creator comes to save the world by finding "support" in his creature. The fact that the Child also rests on his Mother recalls the iconographic tradition of Mary as "Seat of Wisdom", typical of medieval statuary, particularly in the Romanesque style, where the Child is carried in the Virgin's arms. The visible bond of affection between Mother and Child is also reminiscent of Gothic statues, described as "Virgins of Tenderness".⁶ Interestingly, the Child is not turning towards us, but towards his Mother, as we sometimes see in certain icons or ancient statues, where the two embrace tenderly. The loving intimacy of the scene is accentuated by the fact that both Mother and Child have their eyes closed. Finally, a detail will not escape the eye of those who observe this statue: the Mother is carrying an infant on her back. This baby may either remind us that Mary had other children after Jesus' miraculous conception (which doesn't seem to have shocked the Gospel writers, and would economically explain the mention of Jesus' brothers and sisters)⁷ or it may symbolize the Church, God's youngest daughter, whom Mary, as his adoptive Mother, raises and cares for. It's particularly moving to note that, if we see the Church in this baby, the Child's hand that embraces the Mother also touches the infant. Mary's spiritual motherhood does not distance the faithful from the love of Jesus himself.

⁶ Émile Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIIIe siècle*, 1948, p. 436.

⁷ In his commentary on Matthew 1:25, John Calvin warned against any polemics on the subject: "*And he did not know her.* Under the guise of this passage, Helvidius in his day stirred up great trouble in the Church: for by it he wanted to maintain that Mary had been a virgin only until childbirth, and that since then she had had other children by her husband. Saint Jerome strongly and firmly upheld Mary's perpetual virginity and wrote extensively about it. But it should suffice for us to understand that this is not the Evangelist's intention, and that it is folly to attempt to gather from this passage what it was after the birth of Christ. [...] The Evangelist says nothing about what happened after childbirth. It is well known that, according to the common usage of Scripture, these ways of speaking are to be understood in this way. Certainly, this is a point on which no man will ever argue, unless it be some curious person: on the contrary, no man will ever obstinately contradict it, unless it be some stubborn or rambunctious person." Jean Calvin, *Commentaires de Jehan Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament: Sur la concordance ou harmonie composé des trois évangélistes ascavoir S. Matthieu, S. Marc et S. Luc. Tome premier*, Meyrueis, 1854, p. 62.

Marie des Retrouvailles?⁸

The theme of encounter and reunion is very present in the composition of this piece, but also in the history and circumstances surrounding its manufacture and arrival at the Église française du Saint-Esprit in New York.

First of all, the love and affection that bind the ten-year-old Child to his Mother could perfectly illustrate the reunion of Mary and Jesus after he had disappeared for three days in Jerusalem. The Gospel of Luke 2:41-51 reports:

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of this. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

This rare mention of an event from Jesus' childhood in the canonical Gospels testifies to the humanity of Jesus, human among humans and yet God. It is in him that God finds humanity, and humanity its God. This reunion is also considered the fifth joyful mystery of the Rosary, a Marian devotion that involves meditating on events in Mary's life in relation to Jesus⁹.

Return and reunion is a mystery that runs through the Scriptures and the entire Jewish and Christian tradition. Related to the Hebrew "*shuv*", which means both "return" and "conversion", it is the very movement of the creature's return to God that is brought about by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice of God's love is described by Paul in Philippians 2:5-9:

Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being

⁸ The term "*retrouvailles*" from the verb "*retrouver*" which means to "find again" means the event of being reunited, especially after being estranged by time or distance.

⁹ For an introduction to this Marian devotions, see p. 65.

found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

By taking on a human form and life, God in Jesus Christ brings his creatures back to himself, restoring them to the glory for which he had destined them. This glory is found in the very love that God gives us, a relationship of heart-to-heart intimacy that we find with him and that the reunion of this Child and Mother depicts so well.

The circumstances surrounding the statue's arrival at Saint-Esprit also suggest many encounters and reunions. A French-speaking church founded in 1628 by Huguenot refugees, Saint-Esprit has been a place of reunion and encounter for many different people, cultures and spiritual traditions since its foundation in colonial times. Such a statue depicting the tender, calm reunion of Jesus and his Mother seems so appropriate for our little church, whose modest sanctuary also encourages encounters.

Moreover, the features of this statue are also the fruit of the meeting of European and African cultures, the product of a cultural and artistic cross-fertilization. Carved in Congo-Brazzaville by Bernard Mouanga-Nkodia, this sculpture bears witness to the artist's quest to integrate the influences of European and African sculpture, and to bridge the gap between different periods of Congolese statuary. Through his style, which this piece embodies, the sculptor also brings together tradition and modernity. Such an aesthetic responds well to Anglican taste, whose theology and liturgical atmosphere often place these two poles in creative tension.

This statue has also come to us thanks to Chantal and her gift for bringing people together, a gift she puts to good use in the service of her NGO, which promotes the reunion of Congolese and New York culture. Chantal's work, and the presence of this statue in Saint-Esprit, embodies Mother Africa's reunion with the children of the New World, taken from her by the slave trade. In meditating with this statue, this mother and her children, which Chantal has brought back from the Congo, it's hard not to recall that this same path was taken by over 12.5 million African slaves when they were deported from Africa to North America, between the 16th and 19th centuries. This indelible link between Africa and America, embodied by this statue, was also recalled when it was blessed during Holy Communion on December 20, 2020. The Diocese of New York had just dedicated this Sunday at its 244th Convention to "a time of thanksgiving for the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the [U.S.] Constitution on December 18, 1865, which abolished slavery in the United States".¹⁰ A small

¹⁰ Diocese of New York, "Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent Designated Time of Thanksgiving for Abolition of Slavery," December 20, 2020. Accessed 04/30/24, <https://dioceseny.org/third-and-fourth-sundays-of-advent-designated-time-of-thanksgiving-for-abolition-of-slavery>

"Statue of Liberty", this statue of Mother and Child symbolizes the tender love of God and His Blessed Mother for all His children, especially those who have been and still are dehumanized and whose dignity has been or still is scorned. Inspired by her sculptor's love of "*the woman in her sorrows*", she radiates a humility and a dignified peace, which no outside gaze confines or conditions; an extraordinary freedom.

Finally, it's hard to talk about an African Virgin in a French-speaking church without thinking of the famous Black Madonna statues¹¹ that populate some of the most famous Marian shrines in mainland France, such as Chartres, Rocamadour and Le Puy-en-Velay. There were over 205 of them in 1945, and certainly many more before the destructions during the French Revolution. Much has been written about their mysterious origins, the oldest of which date back to Antiquity. Even before the arrival of Christianity, a type of black statuary must have developed under Mediterranean influence to represent certain female divinities linked to fertility and the earth, such as Cybele, Isis or Demeter. The appearance of statues of black Virgins a few centuries later in Western Europe, in regions that had been exposed to these influences, is very probably a continuation or resurgence of these traditions.

What is interesting for our purposes is that from the outset, (as is the case with our statue), the Black Virgins are sacred representations linked to the meeting of different cultures and religious influences. The circumstances of their discovery are also generally quite similar to those that brought our statue to our sanctuary. Heirs to pre-Christian divinities worshipped in caves or caverns, the statues of these Madonnas are often themselves discovered in caves or buried underground. Legends also often show their insistence on being worshipped as they wish, wherever they wish:

In Côte-d'Or, on the left bank of the river Tille, the small village of Arceau honors Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours every Whit Monday. Legend has it that in the Middle Ages, at the beginning of the 14th century, a shepherd was tending his flock in a meadow not far from the village. He soon noticed that, every morning, one of his oxen strayed away from the other animals, always heading for the same spot. He followed it and noticed that it was attracted by a wonderfully fresh tuft of grass. Determined to unravel the mystery, the shepherd used a spade to pull up the grass and discovered a statue of the Virgin Mary. Delighted with his find, he carried it triumphantly to the village church. But every night, the Virgin would escape and return to the banks of the fountain that had sprung up where she had been discovered. Eventually, a chapel was built to house her.¹²

In her testimony, Chantal recounts how, after finding it, she thought of getting rid of the statue, which was too painful for her to contemplate, as if, according to the legends, the statue didn't belong where it was. However, once in the church, the statue radiated a comforting

¹¹ Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, *Virgines Noires*, Editions du Rouergue, 2000.

¹² *Id.* 43

peace to Chantal and other parishioners. It was as if it had found its rightful place. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet remarks: "The wandering of the statue is quite characteristic of the legends surrounding the Black Virgins and their association with an underground space. After being brought over from the Congo, every year our statue would return underground to the church basement with the Afrique Fête decorations, only to return the following year, until it didn't want to leave again! Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet also notes that the statues "seem to choose [their] discoverer" (51) - in our case Chantal - and are "all discovered by chance, outside the ecclesiastical presence". All circumstances similar to those of our statue's discovery.

Finally, the tragic fate of some of these French Black Madonna statues, destroyed during the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution, also resonates with that of our Madonna, blessed on the Sunday of remembrance of the abolition of slavery in the United States. Like the African and black mother the artist took as her model, some of the Black Madonna statues were subjected to "xenophobic, not to say racist, reactions" during the Revolution. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet recounts, for example, that when "the populace of Le Puy-en-Velay cried out 'Let's burn the Egyptian!' as the once so-venerated Black Virgin passed by, they had perhaps not forgotten the legend that the image had been brought back from the Crusades by Saint-Louis." She also wonders if we should "see in these vociferations an element of incomprehension in the face of the dark color of the Virgin, which now evokes only evil and suspicion. The Bohemians, who were always kept on the sidelines and regarded with great suspicion, were called Egyptians [...] and at the same time, weren't the Parisian sans-culottes, filled with patriotic élan aroused by the call to the fatherland, vituperating against *l'Autrichienne* [*Queen Marie-Antoinette who was from Austria*]?"¹³

It's hard to think of a better Mary for our little church than such a Mother and Child! Perhaps because, like our own mother, we didn't choose her, but she wanted us. Nothing in her coming to Saint-Esprit was anticipated or planned on our part, and until this story was written down, we discussed it very little together. This statue, the circumstances of his coming among us and his very presence invite us to think across and beyond our denominational, national, cultural and ethnic boundaries. It invites us to reach out to others, to dare to reunite after estrangement, alienation or exile. As Chantal wrote, "*as if by premonition, her sculptor's phrase 'take care of her' has found its full meaning, for it is Jesus himself who takes care of us and also took care of his gentle mother by bringing her here, as he also entrusted her on the Cross to his beloved disciple and to the Church.*"

¹³ *Id.* 228.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, in your holy Mother, heaven and earth are joined so that all may be born to new life. May we, protected by Mary's care, find rest and peace with you. Amen.

Documents related to the statue of the Virgin Mary at Saint-Esprit

VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH SCULPTOR BERNARD MOUANGA-NKODIA

“Afrique24: Congo - Sculptor B. Mouanga-Nkodia worried about his heritage” (in French)

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=IGjq0UgckFI&si=D9E0XntBN2qvOWkF>

SERMON PREACHED ON THE DAY THE STATUE WAS BLESSED

Last Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 20, 2020

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38

Since the start of the pandemic, we've often found ourselves in Mary's situation when the angel comes to visit: all alone in our room. I imagine Mary is lonely, perhaps even suffering a little from this solitude. Joseph, like many of you who telecommute, has to work in the quiet of his workshop. Completely unknown, Mary is not yet the Mother of God, nor does she suffer from the solitude of the stars, the object of so many devotions, treatises and prayers over the centuries. She was simply there, in her everyday life. Many paintings depict her reading or praying, when suddenly the angel appears and speaks to her: "Rejoice! The Lord has granted you a great favor; he is with you." !

A lot has happened in our daily lives since March. Like Mary, we've been confused, and we're still wondering what all these changes and messages mean for us. It's enough to let all these changes in habits, all these uncertainties undermine us, frighten us, lose us. How much longer will this pandemic last? Will I still have a job in a few months? Will I be able to see my family and friends again soon? Will we be able to celebrate Afrique Fête together in the garden this summer? If you're as anxious as I am, these are the kind of questions that keep you up at night. We make plans, imagining how this or that situation might be resolved. Because of all this restlessness inside me, like a pregnant woman, I often have trouble sleeping.

Christian pastors and theologians, following in Paul's footsteps, saw Mary as an example of obedience. It was her obedience that "permitted" salvation. Paul's word for obedience is *hypokoê*, which literally means "listening from below". Mary is said to have conceived Jesus Christ because she accepted a command and did her master's will, just as a soldier or slave listens to an order. Nothing seems further from the text of the Annunciation than this very military - and reductive - conception of our participation in God's love. Mary, unlike a soldier or a slave, is astonished and asks, "How can this be, since I am a virgin? Her questions are not critical or distrustful; she is not angry, but simply asks that God, through the angel, speak to her more. Mary's questions never contradict her desire to pay attention to God. In fact, God's love and mercy reveal in Mary a whole new way of "obeying" already prefigured in the prophets. It's the kind of obedience that makes her clasp her son to her bosom, stand at the foot of the Cross and pray with the apostles when all seems lost. Mary's obedience, which is neither abasement nor pride, I see every time I look at the figure of this mother, the statue that since the Feast of Africa represents the Virgin Mary for us in the church. This statue teaches us that God is with us just by contemplating her gentleness, she teaches us to obey in this new way. By embracing her fears, her challenges and her love, Mary listens, examines the signs given to her, and even asks for more. She will receive many! In English, we would say that, in a way that is not simply intellectual, she "*understands*", *she under-stands* her son, and his understanding transforms her.

Through astonishment, inattention or distraction, we can receive with fear, like Mary at the beginning, what is in fact a blessing: "Rejoice! The Lord has granted you a great favor, he is with you". The truly marvellous thing is that, in the midst of what frightens us - our weaknesses and what's new - we find not only relief from our anxieties, but real joy. For Marie, the lump in her stomach will turn into a round belly. It's in the very place where we feel fear that God wants our peace to germinate. In fact, I believe that taking care of our fears so that they grow into blessings is the most beautiful form of courage, as well as the most obscure and revolutionary. This courage, which is within everyone's reach, can even begin in a locked room.

It is in Mary's body, in her home, that God's love for her and for all human beings will grow. It is this new form of obedience that we will see fulfilled in her Son, our Lord, and in all the martyrs, confessors and saints. It is this life-giving attention that we find in all those who share in God's life. It's the same obedience and courage found in our Church, in all of you, as we embrace together the difficulties of the pandemic. Let us not hesitate to ask, as Mary did, that God continue to speak to us! For this obedience, unlike that of the slave, the soldier or the modern subject, leaves no one alone. It doesn't let anyone dominate or degrade them. Mary goes to live with her cousin Elizabeth. And we, despite our anguish and isolation, also find ourselves in the sanctuary of our God, who is in each of us the place where he wanted to be born for us, our heart and his.

Mary in Holy Scripture

Mary in the New Testament

Overall, Mary appears fairly infrequently in the New Testament (19 mentions), always in relation to her Son Jesus.

Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38): the story of how the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and give birth to Jesus, the Son of God.

Visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56): Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. During this visit, Elizabeth prophesies and recognizes Mary's blessing.

Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-20): Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem.

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22-40): Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the Temple according to Jewish custom, where they meet Simeon and Anna, who prophesy the child's destiny.

Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15): Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt to escape the persecution of King Herod, thus protecting Jesus from the massacre of innocents.

Jesus' loss and the reunion in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52): Mary and Joseph lose Jesus on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, only to find him three days later in the Temple, talking with the doctors of the law.

Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12): Mary intercedes for Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana, where he performs his first miracle, turning water into wine.

Mary at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25-27): At the moment of Jesus' crucifixion, Mary stands at the foot of the cross with "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

Mary in the Old Testament

Mary, mother of Jesus, who was born in the 1st century BC, does not of course appear in the Old Testament, but Christian tradition has read in several of the Old Testament books prefigurations of Mary and her role in salvation history. Here are just a few of them.

Proverbs 8:22-36: This passage speaks of God's wisdom personified. Some Christians see a prefiguration of Mary in this figure of divine wisdom.

Judges 13:2-25: This passage recounts the announcement of Samson's birth to Manoah's wife by an angel. Although it doesn't directly concern Mary, some see parallels with the Annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel.

Ruth 4:11-22: The figure of Ruth is sometimes associated with that of Mary because of her fidelity, purity and place in Jesus' genealogy, according to Matthew 1:5.

Isaiah 11:1-10: This passage speaks of a branch coming out of the stock of Jesse and the coming of a king descended from David. Some Christians see in this prophecy an anticipation of the coming of Jesus, the descendant of David, with Mary associated with the line of Jesse and David.

Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." This verse is often quoted in the context of Jesus' birth, and some Christians see it as a prophecy that prefigures Jesus' virgin birth and thus Mary's role as virgin mother.

Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: she shall crush your head, and you shall bruise her heel." This verse is interpreted as God's promise to overcome sin through Christ, and some see it as an allusion to Mary, Christ's mother, who is associated with his posterity.

Song of Songs 4:7: "Thou art all fair, my friend, and there is no blemish in thee." This verse is sometimes interpreted as an allusion to Mary's purity.

Mary in early Christian texts

There are a number of non-canonical Christian texts, also known as apocrypha, which mention or feature Mary. Here are some of the best-known texts:

- ❖ **Protoevangelium of James** (or Gospel of pseudo-Matthew): This text from the 2nd century tells the story of Mary's birth, her consecration to the Temple and her miraculous conception by her parents, Anne and Joachim. It also includes details of Mary's childhood and the birth of Jesus.
- ❖ **Infancy Gospel according to Thomas**: This text, which probably dates from the 2nd or 3rd century, contains accounts of Jesus' childhood, including episodes involving Mary. It is often considered part of the Gnostic (non-orthodox) tradition.
- ❖ **Gospel of pseudo-Matthew**: This medieval text recounts elements of Jesus' childhood, including stories about Mary, such as her miraculous conception and the visit of the Magi.
- ❖ **Book of the Nativity of Mary**: This 4th century text tells in detail the story of Mary's birth, her life in the Temple and her relationship with Joseph.
- ❖ **Acts of Pilate** (or Gospel of Nicodemus): Although this text does not focus primarily on Mary, she is mentioned in some of the narratives, particularly in the scene of the crucifixion and the descent into hell.

Mary, the new Ark of the Covenant?

In Christian tradition, Mary is sometimes compared to the Ark of the Covenant, due to the many theological parallels and concrete literary references between the two. The ark of the covenant was an important relic of the old covenant between God and the people of Israel, while Mary is seen as the new ark, carrying God's presence within her through the birth of Jesus, the Messiah.

- ❖ **Presence of God**: The Ark of the Covenant contained the tablets of the Law, a pot of manna and Aaron's rod, symbols of God's presence and Word. In a similar way, Mary carries within her Jesus, who is the incarnate Word of God (John 1:14).
- ❖ **Sanctification**: The Ark of the Covenant was considered holy and sacred because of God's presence within it. Similarly, Mary is considered holy because of her unique relationship with Jesus, the Son of God.
- ❖ **Protection**: The Ark of the Covenant was wrapped in special care and protection, as it represented God's presence among His people. Similarly, Mary is often invoked as God's protector and intercessor on behalf of believers.
- ❖ **Journey**: The Ark of the Covenant was carried on the journeys of the people of Israel through the desert, symbolizing God's presence with his people on the move. Mary,

too, traveled with Joseph on the flight to Egypt and the pilgrimages to Jerusalem, always carrying Jesus with her.

These parallels underline Mary's important role in God's plan for the salvation of mankind, as the bearer of Christ and mediator of divine grace, just as the Ark of the Covenant was associated with divine presence and protection in the Old Covenant.

Mary, Queen Mother?

The biblical foundations for beliefs about Mary as Queen of heaven and earth are mainly interpretative and depend on theological traditions based on various passages of the Bible. Here are some of the biblical references often invoked to support this belief:

Revelation 12:1-6: This passage describes a vision of John in which a woman is crowned with stars and gives birth to a son. Traditionally, this woman is interpreted as representing Mary, mother of Jesus, and her son as Jesus himself. Some see this image as an indication of Mary's royalty, as she is crowned.

Revelation 12:14: This verse mentions how the eagle's wings were given to the woman (Mary) to fly into the desert, symbolizing divine protection and preservation of Mary. This passage inspired belief in the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (her ascent to heaven).

Psalms 45:10-17: Although this psalm was originally a poem celebrating a royal wedding, it is sometimes interpreted in Christian tradition as a messianic prophecy, and some see verses 10-17 as a reference to Mary, the mother of the messianic king.

Genesis 41:55: When Mary commands the servants at the banquet in Cana who are short of wine to go to Jesus and do "whatever he [they] tell you", John's Gospel makes a direct reference to the famine in Egypt at the time of Joseph. Pharaoh also commands the Egyptians in need to address Joseph with the same formula, as the commentary of several Bibles, including the NRSV, underlines: "When the Egyptians began to suffer from hunger, they asked Pharaoh for something to eat. He replied to the entire population: 'Speak to Joseph and do as he tells you'. This also implies a parallel between Pharaoh and Mary, giving her, by comparison, a royal aura.

Luke 1:26-38: Although this passage does not deal explicitly with Mary's kingship, it does describe the Annunciation, where the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive

and give birth to Jesus, the King of kings. Since a king is not born of commoners, this implies that Mary is also of royal lineage.

Luke 1:52: In the Canticle of Mary (*Magnificat*), Mary says that God overthrows the mighty from their thrones but exalts the humble. In the new order, the kingship of the humble, like that of Mary, replaces that of the powerful of this world.

Mary in Christian theology

Here you'll find extracts from theological and spiritual texts on the Virgin Mary, written by Christians of different centuries and traditions.

Antiquity and the Middle Ages

The Council of Ephesus in 431

It was during the Council of Ephesus (3rd ecumenical council of the Church) held in 431 that Mary was recognized as the Mother of the Son of God, who became incarnate in her womb. This proclamation was made with the approval of the "Letter of Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius", read and approved by the Fathers present at the Council, and of which the following is an extract:

For we do not say that the nature of the Word became flesh by a transformation, nor that it was changed into a complete man, composed of a soul and a body, but rather this: the Word, having united according to the hypostasis a flesh animated by a reasonable soul, became man in an unspeakable and incomprehensible way and received the title of Son of man, not by simple will or good pleasure, nor because he would have taken on only the character of it; and we say that there are different natures brought together in true unity, and that from the two there resulted one Christ and one Son, not because the difference of natures was suppressed by the union, but rather because divinity and humanity formed for us the one Lord Christ and Son by their ineffable and unspeakable concurrence in unity. [...]

For it was not an ordinary man who was first begotten of the Virgin and upon whom the Word then descended, but it is for having been united to his humanity from the very womb that he is said to have undergone carnal generation, inasmuch as he appropriated the generation of his own flesh. [...]

Thus they [the holy fathers] were emboldened to call the Virgin Mother of God, not because the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the Virgin, but because from her was begotten his holy body animated with a reasonable soul, a body to which the Word was united according to the hypostasis and for this reason is said to have been begotten according to the flesh.¹⁴

¹⁴ "The Council of Ephesus and the definition of Theotokos" from *mariedenazareth.com*, accessed 04/15/2024.

Bernard de Clairvaux, Excerpt from the second homily *Super Missus est*, 17

A great theologian and monastic founder of the Middle Ages, St. Bernard sees Mary as a privileged way to approach Jesus. He praised her closeness to God and emphasized her role as mediator of graces.

O man, whoever you are, whoever in this tide of the world you feel adrift among storms and tempests, don't take your eyes off the light of this star. When the gusts of temptation are unleashed, when you're heading straight for the reefs of adversity, look to the star, call out to Mary! If pride, ambition or jealousy roll over you in their waves, look to the star, cry out to Mary! If anger or greed, if the spells of the flesh rock the boat of your soul, look to Mary. When, tormented by the enormity of your faults, ashamed of the stains of your conscience, terrorized by the threat of judgment, you let yourself be drawn into the abyss of sadness, the abyss of despair, think of Mary. In peril, in anguish, in critical situations, invoke Mary, cry out to Mary! Let her name never leave your lips, let it never leave your heart, and to obtain the favor of her prayers, never cease to imitate her life. If you follow her, you'll never go astray; if you pray to her, you'll never despair; if you keep her in your thoughts, you'll never stumble. Let her hold you, no more falls. Let her protect you, no more fear. Under her guidance, no more fatigue. Thanks to her favor, you reach port. And this is how your own experience shows you how justified is the saying: The virgin's name was Mary! (Luke 1:27).¹⁵

¹⁵ Cited by <https://fr.aleteia.org/2021/02/12/les-plus-beaux-textes-sur-marie-regarde-lettoile-de-bernard-de-clairvaux/>, consulted on 15/04/2024.

Martin Luther and the Virgin Mary

Martin Luther, a central figure of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th^{ème} century, wrote many fine pages on the Virgin Mary and her role in the economy of salvation. Although he contested certain Marian practices of the Roman Catholic Church, such as excessive worship of the saints and Marian venerations, Luther retained a deep affection for Mary as the mother of Jesus. He rejected the Catholic doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, but maintained his belief in Mary's perpetual virginity. While acknowledging Mary's role in salvation history, he insisted on the primacy of Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and mankind. So, although Luther reformed many aspects of Christian theology, his connection with the Virgin Mary reflected both his continuity with Catholic tradition and his reforming convictions. Here are some extracts¹⁶ from Luther's writings on the Virgin Mary.

There is no doubt that the Virgin Mary is in heaven. We just don't know how it happened. And since the Holy Spirit has told us nothing about it, we cannot make it an article of faith [...] It is enough to know that she lives in Christ.

Sermon from August 15, 1522, the last time Martin Luther preached on the feast of the Assumption

The veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart.

Sermon, September 1, 1522

She is the highest woman and the noblest jewel of Christianity after Christ [...] She is nobility, wisdom and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. However, honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as not to injure Christ or the Scriptures.

Sermon, Christmas 1531

There's no woman like you. You are more than Eve or Sarah, blessed above all nobility, wisdom and holiness.

Sermon, Feast of the Visitation, 1537

We must honor Mary as she herself wished and as she expressed it in the Magnificat. She praised God for his works. How then can we praise her? Mary's true honor is the honor of God, the praise of God's grace [...] Mary is nothing for herself, but for Christ [...] Mary does not want us to come to her, but through her to God.

Explanation of the Magnificat, 1521

¹⁶ Excerpts from works of Martin Luther from catholicbridge.com/catholic/martin-luther-on-mary et traduits par nos soins. Consulted on 03/30/2024.

John Calvin and the Virgin Mary

Unlike Luther, John Calvin only mentions Mary incidentally in his commentaries on the Scriptures. While recognizing the special honor that God gives to Mary as Mother of the Lord, he is concerned that Christians should not lose sight of the fact that we derive our life from the Creator Himself. Calvin comments here on a passage from the Gospel of Luke 11:27-28, often used by Catholic tradition to justify praising Mary. "And it came to pass, as he said these things, that a woman of the people lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts which thou suckedst. So he said, But blessed rather are those who hear the word of God, and keep it." (Geneva Bible Translation). Calvin shows that, placed in its biblical context, this passage, far from inciting Marian devotion, insists rather on the centrality of the Word of God, which Mary received excellently.

Luke. Blessed, etc. By this word of praise the woman wished to magnify the excellence of Christ: for it must not be thought that she had any regard for Mary, whom by chance she had never seen: but this returns greatly to the glory of Christ, when she declares noble, and pronounces blessed the womb in which he was borne. And it is not an impertinent thing, but accordant with the manner of speaking which is often in Scripture, to celebrate this blessing of God. For we know that this, as a singular gift of God, is preferred to all others, when he gives lineage, and even who is adorned with excellent virtues. So it cannot be denied that God did Mary a very great honor, choosing her and ordaining her mother to his Son. However, Christ's answer is not so much in agreement with the woman's words as it is an oblique correction: "*But rather,*" he says, "*blessed are those who hear the word of God.*" We see how Christ esteems almost nothing of this point, of which only the woman had taken notice. And also what seemed to him to be the principal and most honourable thing in Mary, was much less than the other graces God had bestowed upon her: for it was a far more excellent thing in Mary, to be regenerated by the spirit of Christ, than to conceive Christ according to the flesh in her womb: to have Christ spiritually living in her, than to nurse him from her breasts. In short, the main felicity and glory of the holy virgin consisted in being a member of her Son, so that the heavenly Father would count her among the new creatures. However, as for me, I think that this woman's words have been taken up for another cause and another purpose: namely, because men have this bad habit of letting God's gifts go to waste, which however they greatly admire, and magnify with full mouths. For this woman, in praising Christ, had forgotten what is really the main thing, namely that in him salvation is offered to all. So it was a rather meagre praise, since no mention was made of his grace and virtue, which extends throughout the whole world. And yet Christ rightly attributes another praise to himself, so that his mother alone is not reputed blessed, even for the eyes of the flesh: but so that it may be known that he brings us all true and eternal

beatitude. So then the dignity and excellence of Christ is prized as it belongs, when we think well to what end he has been given to us from the Father, and receive the goods he has brought us, that we may be made happy in him, who are miserable in ourselves. [...] Now we see what a difference there is between Christ's answer and the woman's praise of him: for he offers and presents liberally to all the grace of beatitude which she had restricted and enclosed among the servants. And then he shows that he is not to be prized in the common way, seeing that he has all the treasures of life, beatitude and heavenly glory enclosed in his person, which he dispenses and distributes through the Word, so as to make partakers of them all who will receive the Word in faith: for the free adoption of God, of which we have assurance through the Word, is the key to the Kingdom of heaven. Now we must observe well how these two things are conjoined, which we must first hear, and then keep. [...] This word *Keep the word*, is added quant and quant which means as much as to receive it with effectiveness: namely when it takes a lively root in our hearts to bring its fruit. So a forgetful listener, whose ears are only beaten by external doctrine, advances nothing, and brings no profit. On the contrary, all those who boast of secret inspirations, wanting no advantage, and under color of this despise external preaching, close themselves off from the entrance to heavenly life. Therefore, let no man, with detestable arrogance, attempt to separate things which the Son of God has joined together. Moreover, the stupidity of the Papacy is marvellous in this respect, when they sing these words in honour of Mary, by which their superstition is so obviously condemned. And in their graces after the meal, they take the woman's saying, leaving the correction which was the main thing. But this is how those who deliberately profane God's sacred word at will deserve to be dumbed down in every way.

Jean Calvin, *Commentaires de Jehan Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament: Sur la concordance ou harmonie composé des trois évangélistes asçavoir S. Matthieu, S. Marc et S. Luc. Tome premier*, Meyrueis, 1854, pp. 317-319.

Anglican theologians and the Virgin Mary

At the time of the Anglican Reformation, many Church of England theologians sought a middle way between what they saw as the excesses of Roman Catholic Marian devotion and those of Protestant iconoclasm.¹⁷

Bishop Thomas Ken (1637-1711)

Anglican bishop Thomas Ken is celebrated as one of the fathers of Anglican hymnody. In the hymn excerpt below, he describes the special grace of the Virgin Mary.

For aid in Praising the Grace Vouchsafed to the Blessed Virgin

O Jesus, who bless'd Mary didst revere,
Near Thee enthroned in the celestial Sphere,
Help me to sing the plenitude of Grace,
Exhaling her above all female race,
The mighty Love Thou didst on her diffuse,
Whom Thou God-man didst for Thy Mother choose.

Bishop John Cosin (1594-1672)

A Church of England bishop of high-church leanings but committed to communion with other Protestant churches, John Cosin recognizes the Virgin Mary's exceptional place among the saints.

A Thanksgiving for the Blessed Virgin

Almighty God, forasmuch as we be not only taught to pray, but to give thanks also for all men, we do offer upon Thee most high laud, and hearty thanks for all Thy wonderful graces and virtues, which Thou hast declared in all Thy Saints, and by them bestowed upon Thy holy

¹⁷ Most of these excerpts are taken from *Devotions of Our Lady and Stations of the Cross*, Saint-Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, 2006, p. 37-53.

Church from the beginning of the world; and chiefly in the glorious and most blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; as also in the blessed Angels in heaven; and in all other holy persons upon earth, who by their lives and labours have shined forth as lights in the several generations of the world.

Thomas Traherne (1637-74)

Rediscovered in the 20th century, the work of Thomas Traherne, Anglican priest and poet, stands out for its mystical accents and its meditations on the great themes of the Christian faith from a specifically Anglican perspective. In this text, in the form of a litany and a prayer, he meditates on the excellence of the Virgin Mary among God's creatures.

A Thanksgiving for the Exaltations and for Virtues of the Blessed Virgin

LORD I praise and magnify thy Name

For the Most Holy Virgin-Mother of God, Who is the Highest of thy saints.

The most Glorious of all Thy Creatures.

The most Perfect of all Thy Works.

The nearest unto Thee, in the Throne of God.

Whom Thou didst please to make

Daughter of the Eternal Father.

Mother of the Eternal Son.

Spouse of the Eternal Spirit.

Tabernacle of the most Glorious Trinity.

Mother of Jesus.

Mother of the Messias.

Mother of Him who was the Desire of all Nations.

Mother of the Prince of Peace.

Mother of the King of Heaven.

Mother of our Creator.

Mother and Virgin.

Mirror of Humility and Obedience.

Mirror of Wisdom and Devotion.

Mirror of Modesty and Chastity.

Mirror of sweetness and Resignation.

Mirror of Sanctity.

Mirror of all Virtues.

The most illustrious Light in the Church, Wearing over all her Beauties the veil of Humility to shine the more resplendently in the Eternal Glory.

And yet this Holy Virgin-Mother styled herself but the Hand-maid of the Lord, and falls down with all the Glorious Hosts of angels, and with the armies of Saints, at the foot of Thy Throne, to worship and Glorify Thee for ever and ever.

I praise Thee O Lord with all the Powers and Faculties of my Soul; for doing in Her all Thy Merciful Works for my sake, and the Benefit of Mankind. For uttering the Glorious Word: yea rather Blessed are they that Hear the Word of God, and keep it. And for looking round about upon Thy disciples and saying, Behold my Mother and my Brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my Brother and my Sister and Mother. Yea for what Thou wilt say, Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto me.

The most unworthy of all Thy Servants falleth down to worship Thee for Thine own Excellencies; even Thee O Lord, for Thine own perfection, and for all those Glorious Graces, given and imparted to this Holy Virgin, and to all Thy Saints.

Henry Vaughan (1622-95)

Henry Vaughan, a Welsh and Anglican poet, is associated with the metaphysical poetry movement. His work, imbued with mysticism, explores the relationship between creation, man and the divine with a contemplative sensibility. Here, he uses the image of the knot to meditate on Mary's role in the Incarnation, for it is in her that humanity and divinity are intertwined.

Another Thanksgiving for the Virgin as Instrument of the Saving Incarnation

Bright Queen of Heaven! God's Virgin Spouse
The glad worlds blessed maid!
Whose beauty tied life to thy house,
And brought us saving aid.

Thou art the true Loves-knot; by thee
God is made our Ally.
And man's inferior Essence He
With His did dignify.

For coalescent by that Bond
We are His body grown,
Nourished with favours from His hand
Whom for our head we own.

And such a Knot, what arm dares loose,
What life, what death can sever?
Which us in Him, and Him in us
United keeps for ever.

Anthony Stafford (1587-1645)

Author of theological treatises and devotional works, Anthony Stafford was close to high-church Anglican circles. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a fine example of which is shown here, earned him the wrath of more Protestant-minded people in his day.

In Praise of the Blessed Virgin

THOU eternal glory of thy sex! had the Queen of Sheba seen thee, as she did Solomon, she had not so soon been delivered out of the trance into which her admiration cast her. In these she might have discovered all the perfections of which woman-kind is capable....

Thou didst excel Abel in Innocency, Abraham in Faith, Isaac in Obedience, David in Gentleness, the Prophets and Apostles in Piety, and the Martyrs in Patience. O thou whom Heaven would have of the same constancy, purity, and sublimity with itself, thou art so far from having an equal, that all thy sex cannot afford a worthy witness of thy excellencies! O thou Mother of the true Moses, who never put on the yoke of Pharaoh, but stood free in the midst of Egypt! Thou rod of Jesse, always straight, who brought forth the fruit of life! Thou wert here a terrestrial Paradise, where into Serpent never entered, on which God's malediction was never imposed, and hast no doubt, now in the celestial Paradise a conspicuous seat above all the Angelical orders, and next to thy glorified Son himself. For if Christ's promise to all His fellow-feeling members that if they suffer with Him, they shall reign with Him, if they die with Him, they shall live with Him; what eminent place in Heaven shalt thou have assigned to thee, who in soul didst suffer for Him more than all His Martyrs?

O thou bashful Morn that didst precede and produce our Sun! Thou circumscription (if I may so say) of the uncircumscribed! Thou root to this Herb of Grace! Thou Mother of our Creator! Thou nurse to him by whom all things are fed! Thou comprehender of the incomprehensible! Thou bearer of Him whose word sustains the Globes! Thou who didst impart flesh to Him who wanted nothing else!

Thou Sarah, thou Mother of many Nations, who brought forth our Isaac, our Laughter, when a just sorrow conceived for a loss esteemed irreparable had clouded this inferior world! O pardon, gracious Princess, my weak endeavour to sum up thy value, which comes as short of thee as my head does of Heaven. Nothing that is not itself glorified, can express thy glory to the height. Thou deservest a Quire of Queens here, and another of Angels in Heaven to sing thy praises. Were all the Earth's brood, the drops, the sands of the sea, and the stars of Heaven tongued, they could not all express thee so well, as silent extasy.

Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)

Bishop of Winchester, Lancelot Andrewes was a theologian and ecclesiastic renowned for his sermons and his contribution to the translation of the King James Bible into the vernacular. His erudition, reflected in his theological and linguistic works, earned him the respect of his contemporaries.

A Doxology and Petition

Commemorating the allholy, immaculate, more than blessed Mary, Mother of God and ever virgin, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life, to Christ our God; for to Thee, O Lord, belongeth glory, honour, and worship. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with me and all of us. Amen.

Roman Catholic theologians and the Virgin Mary

Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716)

French missionary priest, theologian and Catholic educator of the Grand Siècle, originally from Brittany, Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort played a major role in the development of devotion to the Virgin Mary. His spiritual works are considered classics of Mariology, the study of Mary's role in salvation history.

It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world. Mary was very hidden in her life: that's why she is called by the Holy Spirit and the Church *Alma Mater*... hidden and secret Mother. Her humility was so profound that she had no more powerful and continual attraction on earth than to be unknown to herself and to every creature, to be known only by God. God, in order to grant her the requests she made of him to impoverish and humiliate her, took pleasure in hiding her conception, birth, life, mysteries, resurrection and assumption from all human creatures. Even her parents did not know her, and the Angels often asked one another: *Quæ est ista?* because the Most High hid her from them; or, if he discovered something about her, he hid infinitely more from them. God the Father consented to her not working any miracles in her life, or at least not performing any miracles, even though he had given her the power to do so. God the Son consented to her hardly speaking at all, even though he had communicated his wisdom to her. God the Holy Spirit consented that the Apostles and Evangelists should speak very little, and only as much as was necessary to make Jesus Christ known, even though she was his faithful Spouse. Mary is the excellent masterpiece of the Most High, whose knowledge and possession He has reserved for Himself. Mary is the admirable mother of the Son, whom he took pleasure in humiliating and hiding during his life, to foster his humility, treating her with the name of woman, *mulier*, like a stranger, even though in his heart he esteemed and loved her more than all Angels and men. Mary is the sealed fountain and faithful Spouse of the Holy Spirit, where only he enters. Mary is the sanctuary and resting place of the Holy Trinity, where God is more magnificently and divinely present than in any other place in the universe, without excepting His dwelling on the Cherubim and Seraphim; and no creature, however pure, is allowed to enter without great privilege.

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*,
"Introduction", 1712.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)

French Carmelite and Doctor of the Catholic Church, Thérèse de Lisieux, nicknamed the Little Flower, is one of the world's most beloved saints. Her autobiography Histoire d'une âme and her spirituality of the "little way" have greatly influenced contemporary Christian theology, to the extent that in 1997 she was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. From her earliest childhood, Thérèse had a great devotion to the Virgin Mary, a statue of whom had smiled upon her when she was ill. In this poem, she celebrates with faith and affection the Mother of Jesus, who is also her "heavenly Mother".

Mother full of grace, I know that in Nazareth
You live in poverty, wanting nothing more.
No rapture, miracle, or ecstasy
Embellish your life, O Queen of the Elect !...
The number of little ones on earth is truly great.
They can raise their eyes to you without fear.
It is by the ordinary way, incomparable Mother,
That you like to walk to guide them to Heaven.

While waiting for Heaven, O my dear Mother,
I want to live with you, to follow you each day.
Mother, contemplating you, I joyfully immerse myself,
Discovering in your heart the depths of love.
Your motherly gaze banishes all my fears.
It teaches me to cry, it teaches me to rejoice.
Instead of scorning pure and simple joys,
You want to share in them, you deign to bless them.

At Cana, seeing the married couple's anxiety
Which they cannot hide, for they have run out of wine,
In your concern you tell the Savior,
Hoping for the help of his divine power.
Jesus seems at first to reject your prayer :
« Woman, what does this matter, » he answers, « to you and to me ? »
But in the depths of his heart, He calls you his Mother,
And he works his first miracle for you...

[...]

You love us, Mary, as Jesus loves us,
And for us you accept being separated from Him.
To love is to give everything. It's to give oneself.
You wanted to prove this by remaining our support.
The Savior knew your immense tenderness.
He knew the secrets of your maternal heart.
Refuge of sinners, He leaves us to you
When He leaves the Cross to wait for us in Heaven.

Mary, at the top of Calvary standing beside the Cross
To me you seem like a priest at the altar,
Offering your beloved Jesus, the sweet Emmanuel,
To appease the Father's justice...
A prophet said, O afflicted Mother,
“There is no sorrow like your sorrow !
” O Queen of Martyrs, while remaining in exile
You lavish on us all the blood of your heart !

Saint John's home becomes your only refuge.
Zebedee's son is to replace Jesus...
That is the last detail the Gospel gives.
It tells me nothing more of the Queen of Heaven.
But, O my dear Mother, doesn't its profound silence
Reveal that The Eternal Word Himself
Wants to sing the secrets of your life
To charm your children, all the Elect of Heaven ?

Soon I'll hear that sweet harmony.
Soon I'll go to beautiful Heaven to see you.
You who came to smile at me in the morning of my life,
Come smile at me again ... Mother... It's evening now !...
I no longer fear the splendor of your supreme glory.
With you I've suffered and now I want
To sing on your lap, Mary, why I love you,
And to go on saying that I am your child !...

Poetry by Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face ¹⁸

¹⁸ English translation accessible at mycarmel.blog/2020/12/08/why-i-love-you-o-mary.

Maurice Zundel (1897-1975)

*Swiss Catholic priest, mystic and spiritual writer, Maurice Zundel's theological work emphasized the presence of God in everyday life. An excellent orator, Zundel had a particular talent for explaining the Church's dogmas with simplicity and familiarity. In a lecture he gave to the Franciscan Missionaries of Ghazir in Lebanon on July 26, 1959, he explained the "mystery of Mary", tracing the rise of Marian devotion in the Roman Catholic Church.*¹⁹

All human values are revealed, enhanced, promoted and increased in Christ. And if, at the outset, I said that the Gospel is the Gospel of man as much as the Gospel of God, we have seen proof of this in each of our meditations.

So it's certain that the redemptive economy, the divine plan for mankind, would be distorted if there weren't, alongside the second Adam, the second Eve. There is a couple here, but as it is a unique couple, as it is a couple that is not situated in the series of carnal generations, as it is a couple that must lead the whole species and give meaning to the whole of History, this couple cannot be linked by a carnal bond, it can only be linked by a bond of grace, by a bond that lies at the roots of the person. And that's why this couple is not a couple of spouses, it is a couple that will be constituted by filiation and maternity.

MARY WILL FIRST BE HIS SON'S DAUGHTER

But, it is important to emphasize, Mary's first line of descent will be her own, for primacy in this couple belongs eternally to Jesus. And this is why Mary will first be her Son's daughter in the order of grace, before becoming his mother according to the flesh. This is what Dante expresses so beautifully in the last song of his Divine Comedy, which opens with the words: "*Vergine Madre, Figlia del tuo Figlio, Umile ed alta piu que creatura, Termine fisso d'eterno consiglio...*". "Virgin Mother, daughter of your Son; humble and higher than any creature, fixed term of eternal counsel, you are the one who ennobled human nature in such a way that its Creator did not disdain to make himself his creature."

How admirable! Mary is therefore the daughter of her son. She was given birth to grace precisely by the anticipated outpouring of Christ's grace upon her. She is first and foremost the daughter of her Son. And this is precisely what will be emphasized in all dogmatic

¹⁹ Maurice Zundel, Publications en ligne, "Le mystère de Marie", 1959. Accessed 04/30/24: <https://mauricezundel.com/le-mystere-de-marie/>

definitions of the Blessed Virgin. This is what most Christians ignore: the rigorous Christocentrism of Marian worship in the Church. The center of Marian worship is Christ.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

And there is an admirable epic which illustrates this Christocentrism of the Marian cult in the most striking way, and that's the very long journey of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It was defined, as you know, in 1854. It took centuries and centuries to arrive at this definition, and you may know that when the feast of the Conception - it wasn't yet called the Immaculate Conception - was introduced in the 12th century in Lyon Cathedral, coming from England - it was in England, under the influence of Saint Anselm, that the Conception of Mary was first celebrated liturgically in the West - when the canons of Lyon introduced the feast of the Conception into their church, who protested violently and passionately? It was Saint Bernard! Saint Bernard, the Marian doctor, saying: "But how! You dishonor the Son under the pretext of honoring the mother! Only the conception of Jesus is full of grace. The Virgin cannot accept this homage you offer her, to the detriment of her Son."

Why is Saint Bernard so passionate? Precisely because he wants to defend Jesus' redemption in Mary. For if Mary, if Mary is absolutely free from original sin, as for Saint Bernard there can be no doubt that she never committed any personal fault, then she has no part in the Redemption. Christ did not come for her, Christ did not die for her, and it is precisely the most precious of creatures, and the most holy, that escapes the order of Redemption. And it is this obstacle that theologians have been stumbling over for centuries. They resisted the impulse of popular piety, because they wanted first and foremost to defend the universality of Christ's Redemption: no one is outside, not even the Virgin Mary. And if she doesn't share in the Redemption because of her personal faults, since she never committed any, it can only be because of original sin, which must in some way have affected her.

It's remarkable, striking and admirable that the Doctors should have held back, resisted the drive of popular piety, because they wanted to maintain the absolute Christocentrism of the Marian cult. And how did they overcome this obstacle? By a singular means: they realized that, in First Corinthians, chapter 15, in the Greek text, not in the Vulgate text, but in the Greek text, they realized that in chapter 15 of First Corinthians, Saint Paul affirms that all men will be transformed, but that not all will be resurrected, namely those who will be found alive at the Lord's return. These will not pass through death: they will be immediately transformed into glory, while the dead will rise with their glorious bodies.

And they will reason from this chapter. They will say, "Of course the believers, the faithful who will be found alive at the Lord's return will be mortal like the others - given their

human nature, they should die - in fact, they will not die, because their death will be prevented by Christ's return, who will immediately assume them to eternal glory."

Well, well, well! Something similar happened to Mary. Mary, being normally descended by carnal generation from the first Adam, should have been affected by original sin, i.e. born deprived of the supernatural and presupernatural gifts that were the prerogative of the first Adam. But, just as the living of the last generation will be prevented by Christ, and their death will be swallowed up by the Parousia, by the glorious return of the Lord, so for Mary, this obligation to be subject to original sin was prevented by God's choice, which caused the grace of Christ to flow back to her, a grace that prevents the original sin she should have contracted by virtue of her descent from the first Adam.

So that - and this is the conclusion they drew from this analogy - so that Mary was more redeemed than all the others, since she received divine grace in superabundance, which not only erased original sin in her, but prevented it.

She is the "first of the redeemed", and it is precisely in this way that Dante's magnificent intuition is realized: "She is the daughter of her Son". It is extremely moving to see that the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, the bull of Pius IX, emphasizes precisely that she was redeemed in an eminent, eminent way. Thus, what St. Bernard had sought to safeguard, like St. Thomas Aquinas, like all the doctors who resisted the current of popular piety, has been integrated, has been taken up, has been canonized, if you will, by the Bull which defines the Immaculate Conception by presenting Mary to us as the first of the redeemed.

MARY ENTIRELY PRESENT TO THE LIFE OF HER LIFE WHICH IS JESUS

This unique couple is thus formed by this mysterious reciprocity: Mary is the daughter of Jesus in the order of grace, which goes to the very roots of her person, and which reaches the first moment of her existence to order her to Jesus, in order to make her the living cradle of Jesus, whose mother she will become through the superabundance of her contemplation, in this maternity of the whole person, which makes her the mother not only of Christ, but of the whole human race in the order of Redemption.

This ordination will be found again, identically, in the mystery of the Assumption. The meaning of the dogmatic definition is not at all what we think. The point of the dogmatic definition is precisely to refocus a belief that has long, long been present in the consciousness of the Christian people, and that was favored by popular piety in all the Christian Churches that follow an apostolic tradition. The point of the definition is to refocus this belief in the person of Jesus Christ, and to show precisely that the Assumption is only a corollary, a consequence of Mary's total belonging to Jesus.

Indeed, if Mary is marked in her very person by her living relationship with Jesus, if she is a mother entirely and from the first moment of her existence in her immaculate conception, it is because Jesus is to a unique degree the life of her life, the life of her life. Since in her the person is before nature, her whole nature gravitates in the light of Jesus. And that's precisely why her virginal flesh will become fertile, because it is entirely imbued with the life that is Jesus.

And what we said of our Lord's holy humanity in relation to the Word in whom it subsists, we must say analogously of Mary. She is wholly and always, and from the very first moment without the slightest crack, wholly present to the life of her life, which is Jesus, to this life which is our life, to this life which is her eternal life and ours, for eternal life is precisely Jesus living in us, and first of all Jesus living in her.

And what we concluded when we said that Jesus could not die from his death, we will say analogously of Mary: Mary could not die from her death. Death had nothing to purify in her, death could reach nothing in her, because in her everything was given. Death takes away only what we refuse to give. All that is given, all that is eternalized in love, cannot die. And in Mary, everything is eternalized, everything is eternalized in love, and nothing in her can die.

If she dies, it will be a death of conformity, a death of identification with her Son and consequently with us, a co-redemptive death, an interior death, a death of love, a non-corruptible death, a death that cannot know the decay and corruption of the tomb, because it is not a death that comes from destruction, from the rupture within her of organic energies : It's a death from within, a death from the center, a death of compassion that makes her endure the Passion of Jesus Christ. It's a death of conformity, a death of love, which naturally, by virtue of the very demands of grace and conformity with Jesus, calls for the Resurrection.

And what is this resurrection, if not precisely the triumph in Mary of the life of her life, which is Jesus! And this means that, just as she was at the first moment of her existence in her Immaculate Conception entirely of Jesus, to Jesus and for Jesus, she is identically so in her Assumption. And in her Assumption, she manifests this total belonging to Jesus, who is the life of her flesh as much as he is the life of her spirit.

JESUS' VICTORY OVER DEATH IN MARY

She is therefore entirely situated, entirely situated in the light of Jesus. And the dogmatic definition has precisely this effect, as it has this essential and unique goal of refocusing a devotion that could go astray and make Mary like a second center to Christian piety, of refocusing this belief in the unique center that is Jesus.

In Mary assumed, in Mary risen, in Mary triumphing over death, it is Jesus who triumphs, and this victory in Mary of Jesus over death can only turn to the glory of Jesus, and affirm that Mary enters in a unique way and more than anyone else into the order of Redemption.

This is how the mysterious, unique couple of the second Adam and the second Eve is formed, where humanity, in its dual masculine and feminine aspect, can rediscover the divine plan and experience the full height and splendor of its vocation.

THE HUMAN PERSON IS CALLED TO LIVE FROM GOD

But since we are faced with the resurrection of Mary and her glorified body as the cradle, the virginal cradle of Jesus, we learn once again about the unity of the human being, that the human being is not body on one side and soul on the other, but is a person, that is to say, the whole human being is called to live from God, the whole human being is called to live eternally, the whole human being receives a divine dimension through Jesus. And we return to our conclusions from yesterday: the body is a person, the body is not an object. Impurity consists precisely in treating as an object this reality which is personal and personified by God's grace and presence, and by its vocation to eternity.

Purity means treating the body as a person, giving it infinite value. Exactly the opposite of what we imagine: not to depreciate it as a rag and despise it as a bad place, but to give it, in the light of the Assumption of Mary and the Ascension of Jesus, on the contrary, this value of eternity, always treating it as a person, as a mystery, as a reality that cannot be grasped by a brutal and material touch because precisely, just as a smile and the light from within transfigure the face and communicate the interiority of the spirit, the whole body, clothed in grace and alive with Jesus Christ, becomes a mystery of faith, a mystery hidden in God, a mystery that can only be reached by kneeling in respect and love, as we contemplate Mary in her Assumption in the radiance of Jesus' glory.

THE PRODIGIOUS HUMAN ADVENTURE

And we see, once again, this promotion of human values, this prodigious adventure of man called to make of his whole being a gift that makes him a creator, this marvelous harmony of man finally unified and no longer torn between a body pulled on one side and a spirit pulled on the other, the whole of life ennobled, as Dante so magnificently said, because, through the Virgin Mary, the Creator of the world made himself the creature of the human race.

Mary in literature

Here are a few extracts from literary texts inspired by the Virgin Mary or Marian devotions.

W.E.B. Du Bois

The Souls of Black Folk

“Of the Passing of the First-Born”, 1903

"A child is born to you", sang the yellow piece of paper that fluttered into my room one brown October morning. The fear of fatherhood mingled with the joy of creation; I wondered what he looked and felt like - what his eyes were like, and how his hair curled and crimped. And I thought with holy admiration of her, the one who had slept with Death to snatch a man-child from beneath her heart, while I was unconsciously wandering. I rushed towards my wife and child, repeating to myself, half astonished: "My wife and child? My wife and child?" I dashed faster and faster, faster than a boat or a steam car, and yet an impatient expectation never left me; I left the harsh-voiced city, I left the flickering sea to take refuge in my own Berkshire hills that sadly guard the gates of Massachusetts.

I ran up the stairs to join the bloodless mother and the wriggling child, to join the shrine on whose altar, at my request, a life had offered itself to gain a life, and had gained it. What is this tiny shapeless thing, this newborn cry from an unknown world, this being that is only a head and a voice? I take him in my arms, full of curiosity, and watch him, perplexed, blink, breathe and sneeze. At the time, I didn't love her; it seemed a strange thing to love; but I loved her, my young wife turned mother, whom I now saw blossoming like the splendor of the morning: the transfigured woman. Through her, I came to love this tiny being, as he grew and gained strength, as his little soul blossomed to the rhythm of babbles, cries and stammerings, and as the light and sparkle of life dawned in his eyes. How beautiful he was, with his olive skin and dark golden curls, his brown and blue eyes, his perfect little limbs and the soft, voluptuous roundness that the blood of Africa had imprinted on his features! I held him in my arms, after our hasty return far away, to our home in the South, I held him while I glanced furtively at the burning red earth of Georgia and the sweltering city of a hundred hills,

and I was invaded by a vague concern. Why was her hair dyed gold? Golden hair had always been a bad omen in my life. Why hadn't the brown of her eyes overcome and killed the blue? Because brown was the color of his father's eyes, and his father's father's eyes. And so, in the Land of the Dividing Line of Colors, I saw the shadow of the Veil spread over my baby. It was within the Veil that he was born, I said; and it was within the Veil that he would live: Negro, and son of a Negro.

He grew up to be so robust and agile, so full of bubbling life, so trembling with the unspoken wisdom of a life eighteen months removed from Full Life, my wife and I were not far from adoring this revelation of the divine. Her own life was built and modeled on the child; he tinged her every dream and transformed her every effort into an ideal. No other hand but hers was to touch and adorn those little limbs; no dress or frill was to touch them without tiring her fingers; no other voice but hers could draw her into Dreamland, and she and he spoke together a sweet, unknown language in which they communicated. I, too, dreamed above her little white bed; I saw the strength of my own arm stretched through the ages by the younger strength of hers; I saw the dream of my black fathers step forward into the wild fantasy of the world; I heard in her baby voice the voice of the prophet who was to rise within the Veil.

And so we dreamed and loved and planned through autumn and winter, and until the full bloom of the long Southern spring, until the warm winds came from the fetid Gulf, until the roses shivered and the still harsh sun shook its terrible light over the Atlanta hills. And then, one night, little feet skated painfully to the little white bed, little hands trembled, a warm, blushing face lay on the pillow, and we knew the baby was sick. He lay there for ten days, a brief week and three interminable days, wasting away, wasting away. For the first few days, his mother nursed him cheerfully, laughing at those little eyes that were smiling again. She held him tenderly until the smile faded and Fear lurked beside the little bed.

Then the day didn't end and the night was dreamless terror, and joy and sleep drifted away. Now I hear that voice calling to me from a dreary, dreamless trance at midnight, crying, "The shadow of death! The shadow of death!" I slipped into the starlight to wake the gray doctor, the shadow of death, the shadow of death. The hours trembled, the night listened, the dreadful dawn slipped like an old charm through the lamppost light. Then the two of us, alone, looked at the child who turned to us with big eyes and stretched out his wiry hands - the Shadow of Death! We said nothing and looked away.

He died at dusk, when the sun had set like a brooding grief over the western hills, veiling his face; when the winds spoke not, and the trees, the great green trees he loved, stood still. I saw his breath beat faster and faster, stop, then his little soul leap like a star traveling through the night and leaving behind a world of darkness. The day did not change; the same

tall trees appeared at the windows, the same green grass glistened in the setting sun. Only, in the room of death, the most wretched thing in the world was writhing in pain: a childless mother.

Charles Péguy

The Porch of the Mystery of the Second Virtue, 1912

There are days when patrons and saints just aren't enough. The greatest patrons and the greatest saints. Ordinary patrons and ordinary saints. And when you have to go up, up, up; higher and higher and higher. Then you have to take your courage in both hands. And speak directly to the one who is above all. Be bold. Just once. Boldly address her who is infinitely beautiful. Because she is also infinitely good. To the one who intercedes. The only one who can speak with a mother's authority. To the one who is infinitely pure: because she is also infinitely gentle. To her who is infinitely noble: because she is also infinitely courteous. To her who is infinitely rich: because she is also infinitely poor. To the one who is infinitely high: because she is also infinitely descending. To the one who is infinitely tall: because it is also infinitely small. Infinitely humble. A young mother. To her who is infinitely young: because she too is infinitely motherly. To her who is infinitely upright: because she is also infinitely bowed. To the one who is infinitely joyful: because she is also infinitely painful. To her who is all Grandeur and all Faith: because she is all Charity. To her who is all Faith and all Charity. Because she too is all Hope. Amen.

Francis Jammes

The Church Dressed in Leaves, XXXIII

Œuvres de Francis Jammes, volume 2, *Mercure de France*, 1921, pp. 332-338.

Annunciation

By the rainbow on the shower of white roses,
by the young shiver that runs from branch to branch
and who made the stem of Jesse flourish;
by the Annunciations laughing in the dews
and by the lowered eyelashes of serious fiancées :

Hail Mary.

Visitation

By the exaltation of your humility
and the joy of the hearts of the visited humble;
by the Magnificat intoned by a thousand nests,
by the lilies of your arms joined towards the Holy Spirit
and by Elisabeth, trellis where a fruit quivers :

Hail Mary.

Nativity

By donkey and by ox, by shadow and by straw,
by the poor woman who is told to go away,
by the nativities who had on their graves only
bouquets of frost with wings of doves;
by virtue that struggles and virtue that succumbs:

Hail Mary.

Purification

By your modesty offering turtledoves,
by old Simeon weeping at the altar,
by the prophetess Anne and by your mother Anne,
by the obscure carpenter who, bent over his cane,
gently followed the donkey's little steps:

Hail Mary.

Invention of Our Lord in the Temple

By the mother who learns that her son is cured
By the bird calling the bird that fell from the nest
By the grass that thirsts and receives the shower
By the lost kiss, by love given back
And by the beggar finding his change

Hail Mary.

Agony

By the little boy who dies next to his mother
While children play on the lawn
And by the wounded bird who doesn't know why
Its wing is suddenly bloodied and falling
By thirst and hunger and burning delirium

Hail Mary.

Flogging

By the beaten kids by the drunkard who comes home

By the donkey who gets kicked in the stomach

And by the humiliation of the punished innocent

By the sold virgin who was undressed

By the son whose mother was insulted

Hail Mary.

Crown of thorns

By the beggar who never had another crown

than the flight of hornets, friends of yellow orchards ;

and no sceptre but a stick against dogs;

by the poet whose forehead is girded with blood

from the brambles of desires it never reaches:

Hail Mary.

Carrying the cross

By the old woman who, stumbling under too much weight

Cries out: "My God!" by the unfortunate whose arms

Couldn't rely on human love

Like the Son's Cross on Simon of Cyrene

By the horse that fell under the cart it was pulling

Hail Mary

Crucifixion

By the four horizons that crucify the world

For all those whose flesh tears or succumbs
By those without feet, by those without hands
By the whimpering patient undergoing surgery
And by the righteous put among the murderers

Hail Mary.

Resurrection

As the night fades and we see again
the rosehip that laughs on the heart of dawn;
by the Easter bell with its cheerful voice
and which, on Holy Saturday, in full flight,
covers the mouths of the valleys with Alleluias :

Hail Mary.

Ascension

By the hermit's steep ascent
to the peaks where the white partridges live,
by flocks climbing the dawn sky
to feed on more than honey snow,
and by the Ascension of the glorious sun:

Hail Mary.

Pentecost

By the pastoral fires that come down at night,
on the front of the hillside, these apostles praying ;
by the flame that cooks the poor man's black supper;

by the lightning whose Spirit lights up like a stubble,
but for Eternity, the nothingness of every man :

Hail Mary.

Assumption

By the old woman who reaches, carrying a wooden bundle,
the top of the road and the shadow of the Cross,
and that his most beautiful son comes to help in his grief;
by the dove whose flight in the light
blends in so well that it soon becomes nothing more than a prayer:

Hail Mary.

Coronation of the Blessed Virgin

By the Queen who never had another Crown
than the stars, treasure of an ineffable Alms,
and no sceptre but the lily of an old garden;
by the virgin whose forehead bows, crowned
with the roses of the desires her love reaches:

Hail Mary.

Mary in prayer

The *Magnificat* - Gospel of Luke 1:46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

[Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.]

Ave Maria

(Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism)

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

*Ave, María, grátia plena,
Dóminus tecum.
Benedicta tu in muliéribus,
et benedíctus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.
Sancta María, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.*

Angelic greeting (orthodoxy)

O Virgin Theotokos, rejoice,
Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus,
You gave birth to the savior of our souls!

Ave Maria (Lutheranism)

Hail Mary, full of grace;
The Lord is with you.
Blessed art thou among women
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Amen.

Salve Regina

Sung or recited at the end of certain evening prayers, particularly Compline, throughout the liturgical year. However, it is also often used during ordinary time as a personal or community devotional prayer. Outside the liturgy, the "Salve Regina" is often used in processions, pilgrimages and Marian devotions.

Queen, mother of mercy: our life, sweetness, and hope, hail. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you we sigh, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, our advocate, those merciful eyes toward us. And Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, after our exile, show us. O clement, O loving, O sweet	<i>Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ, vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle. Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte; Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.</i>
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Alma Redemptoris Mater

Traditionally sung during Advent and up to the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on February 2. This prayer is often used as the antiphon for the Angelic Salutation, replacing the "Regina Caeli" during this time of year.

Loving Mother of the Redeemer, who remains the accessible Gateway of Heaven, and Star of the Sea, Give aid to a falling people that strives to rise; O Thou who begot thy holy Creator, while all nature marvelled, Virgin before and after receiving that "Ave" from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy on sinners.	<i>Alma Redemptoris Mater, quæ pervia cæli porta manes, and stella maris, succurre cadenti surgere qui curat, populo : Tu quæ genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem, Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.</i>
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Ave Regina Cælorum

Traditionally sung during the liturgical season of Lent, from February 2 (feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple) to Maundy Thursday, eve of the Easter Triduum. This prayer replaces the Angelus after the feast of Candlemas, marking the transition to the penitential season of Lent.

Hail, Queen of Heaven.	<i>Ave Regina cælorum</i>
Hail, Lady of Angels	<i>Ave Domina angelorum,</i>
Hail, thou root, hail, thou gate	<i>Salve radix, salve porta,</i>
From whom into the world, a light has arisen:	<i>Ex qua mundo lux est orta :</i>
Rejoice, glorious Virgin,	<i>Gaude, Virgo gloriosa,</i>
Lovely above all others,	<i>Super omnes speciosa :</i>
Farewell, most beautiful maiden,	<i>Vale, o valde decora,</i>
And pray for us to Christ.	<i>Et pro nobis Christum exora.</i>

Regina Cæli

Traditionally sung or recited during the Easter season, it replaces the Angelus at noon. This practice begins on Easter Day and continues until Pentecost. In some regions, however, it is also recited or sung throughout the year, especially after Sunday vespers.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.	<i>Regína caéli, lætáre, Allelúia!</i>
For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.	<i>Quia quem meruísti portáre, Allelúia!</i>
Has risen, as he said, alleluia.	<i>Resurréxit, sicut dixit, Allelúia!</i>
Pray for us to God, alleluia.	<i>Ora pro nóbis Déum, Allelúia!</i>

Litanies to the Black Madonna

Set to music in 1936 by Francis Poulenc, these litanies are associated with the veneration of the Black Madonna of Rocamadour in the Lot department of France.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, listen to us.

Jesus Christ, hear us.

Father God, creator, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, sanctifier, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, who are one God, have mercy on us.

Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us,

Virgin, Queen and Patroness, pray for us.

Virgin whom Zacchaeus the publican made known and loved,

Virgin to whom Zacchaeus or Saint Amadour erected this sanctuary,

Please pray for us.

Queen of the sanctuary, consecrated by Saint Martial,

and where he celebrated his holy mysteries,

Queen, next to whom Saint Louis knelt,

asking you for the happiness of France, pray for us.

Queen, to whom Roland consecrated his sword, pray for us.

Queen, whose banner won battles, pray for us.

Queen, whose hand delivered the captives, pray for us.

Notre-Dame, whose pilgrimage is enriched by special favors.

Notre-Dame, which impiety and hatred have often sought to destroy.

Notre-Dame, which people visit as they did in the past,

Please pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, forgive us

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, hear us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Our Lady, pray for us.

That we may be worthy of Jesus Christ.

Madeleine Delbrêl (1904-1964)

"La sainteté des gens ordinaires", Nouvelle Cité, 2009, pp. 98-99.

Holy Mary, who better than anyone knows that every mission is a continuation of the Redemptive Incarnation of your Son, give us, missionaries of our poor age, the authentic meaning of this Incarnation and Redemption. Give us the ability to penetrate to the very depths of this world, to bring to it the Word of God lived with all the strength of our hearts. But above all, Holy Mary, Mother of God, be our capacity for Grace, the silence in which the Word of God can take possession of us without alteration or warping, the docility in which the Holy Spirit will model the missionary we must be. Give us to understand that pursuing this incarnation is not to conform Grace to the form of this world, but to put into it a life so powerful and so new, that it is revived and rejuvenated. *So be it.*

Mary in devotions

Mary has always held a place of honor in Anglicanism, and the number of cathedrals or churches dedicated to the Mother of God in England exceeds that of other saints. Most cathedrals and some larger parish churches have a separate altar in a chapel dedicated to Mary the mother of Jesus at the east end of the building. Since the beginnings of Christianity in England, these chapels have been and continue to be at the heart of Marian devotions. Four days are dedicated to Mary in the liturgical calendar of the Anglican Church: the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas), the Annunciation (March 25), the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (May 31) and the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary (or Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15).

These feasts are marked by public worship and prayer, but here we will explore the practice of private devotions and prayers linked to the veneration of the Mother of Jesus. Since the Reformation, for many Protestants, the words "Marian devotions" conjure up images of novenas to Mary, a regular rosary hour or small cards featuring an image of Mary and a specific prayer addressed to her. While it's true that many Anglicans use the same prayers as their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, in the Anglican/Episcopal Church, Marian devotions can have different aspects or tones that have evolved over the centuries. While most Episcopalians are happy to sing Christmas carols that are addressed directly to Mary, far fewer would want to do the same thing in their private prayers.

Here we explore two ways of praying with Mary and her unique relationship with Jesus. We'll look first at the Angelus prayers, then at the tradition of praying the Rosary.

The Angelus

∇. The angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary:

℞. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

∇. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord

℞. Be it done to me according to thy Word.

Hail Mary etc.

Ÿ. And the Word was made flesh

Ŕ. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary etc.

Ÿ. Pray for us, holy Mother of God

Ŕ. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Ÿ. Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Ŕ. Amen.

The name of this little prayer cycle comes from the first words of the Latin text "Angelus", meaning angel: the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary at the Annunciation, inaugurating God's plan of salvation through the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ. These prayers have been used by Christians of many denominations for over a thousand years. They are traditionally recited three times a day: in the morning, at midday and in the evening, before or at the end of Vespers. In many places, the Angelus is announced by the ringing of church bells. The bells are rung three times for each verse and each responsory, and nine times for the concluding prayer. The Angelus bell doesn't call us to church: it calls us to stay where we are, but to turn our thoughts away from our immediate daily concerns and towards God. Angelus bells are a public call to private devotion.

At first glance, it seems that the prayers are addressed to Mary, but on closer inspection we see that the Angelus is in fact a memorial to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. God is addressed and worshipped as Lord, while Mary is venerated as "Blessed among women"; the words are taken from the story of the Annunciation in Luke's Gospel. By honoring Mary in this way, we also honor Christ.

There is also another way of approaching the Angelus as a private devotion:

The first verse and the response remind us that God is the initiator of the encounter. Where have we noticed God initiating an encounter in our lives? What has God conceived in us? How will we use this little moment of prayer to reflect on this question and observe God's activity in our lives, of which we would otherwise be unaware?

The second verse and the response ask us how we are to respond to God's initiative. Will we, like Mary, allow God to work through us and conceive in us what we would otherwise be unable to conceive? It's a bit like the little prayer "Lord, do for me what I cannot do for myself". In Luke 17:10, Jesus teaches us that, like his mother Mary, we are all servants of God: "So it is with you: when you have done all that you are commanded, say, 'We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty.'" It's God's grace that works in us, if only we let it fill us, as it did Mary.

The third verse and response invite us to ask ourselves where we see the results of this surrender to God's grace at work within us. Through Christ, God dwells among us, at the very heart of our daily activities, and the Angelus prayer draws our attention to the moments of grace in our lives.

The *Ave Maria* prayer evokes the words spoken by the angel Gabriel to Mary at the Annunciation. The mention of sin and death is not just a reminder that our lives are short, and that we have probably already acted during the day in ways we regret. The prayer is also full of hope and forgiveness, expressed also in the final prayer to God and Christ. Through the Angelus, we re-experience the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, all in three short verses and responses and two short prayers. With this prayer, we can meditate on the movement of our own salvation through the life and faith of Mary, the Mother of Christ.

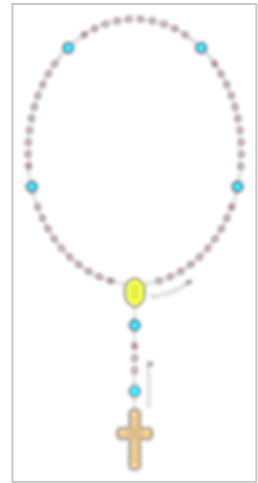
The Rosary

As with many other religions, the use of an external aid for prayer (such as lighting a lamp for Buddhists or using a prayer mat or rosary for Muslims) serves to calm our minds and focus our wandering thoughts. The best way to distance ourselves from our immediate environment is often to concentrate on our bodies themselves, using objects we can touch and slide between our hands. The description of the "correct" way to recite the Rosary can sometimes be rather off-putting and unnecessarily complicated. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why some churches - and online prayer ministries - appoint a facilitator to guide people through the various stages of praying the Rosary. Those following the guide can concentrate on holding the beads and listening to meditations on each of the mysteries, then responding aloud to the repeated *Hail Mary* prayer.

The traditional rosary consists of five circular series of ten beads, separated by a larger bead. A short cord of beads is attached to the circle of beads by a bead in the shape of a medal

coin, often decorated with a cross, an image of Jesus, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, or the Virgin Mary. The short five-grain cord ends in a crucifix. There are variations in the use of certain prayers on the small bead cord, but the following model is the most common in the Anglican/Episcopal Church:

- The rosary is begun by making the sign of the cross and reciting the *Apostles' Creed* while holding the crucifix.
- The *Our Father* is said on the first grain above the crucifix.
- We recite three *Hail Marys* on the following three beads, each representing Faith, Hope and Love, trusting that using the rosary will help us grow in these three virtues.
- *Glory to the Father* is recited on the last and fourth bead of this chain.
- The first Mystery is announced by touching the medal-shaped bead.
- A *Hail Mary* is recited over each of the ten grains preceding the next large grain.
- The following Mysteries are announced on each of the following large grains.



Using beads in this way is not only intended to calm our thoughts and provide an anchor for our devotion, it also serves to let the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts as we meditate and pray with the five Mysteries taken from Scripture. These Mysteries refer to events in the life of Mary or Christ, or both together.

It is possible to use the associated Bible verses for each of these Mysteries. Here are some of the verses traditionally associated with each mystery:

The Five Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation: Isaiah 9:2; Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 85:10-11; Psalm 46:4-5; Hosea 14:5-6; Luke 1:26-27; Luke 1:28-29; Luke 1:30-31; Luke 1:35; Luke 1:38

The Visitation: Luke 1:39; Luke 1:41; Isaiah 49:13; Zechariah 2:10; Isaiah 40:3; Jeremiah 31:13; Isaiah 51:5; Isaiah 52:8; Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 52:10

The Nativity: Isaiah 9:6; Wisdom 18:14-15; Isaiah 66:7; Isaiah 40:1-2; Psalm 46:10-11; Revelation 21:2-3; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 2:6-7; Luke 2:8-9; Luke 2:10-11

Presentation: Luke 2:22; Deuteronomy 26:10; Haggai 2:8; Exodus 15:17; Isaiah 49:6; Ezra 1:3; Psalm 131:8; Psalm 24:7; Daniel 7:13; Genesis 27:27

The Discovery of Jesus in the Temple: Luke 2:42-43; Luke 2:46; Luke 2:48; Luke 2:49-50; Psalm 27:4; 2 Maccabees 3:30; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 48:1-3; Psalm 87:1-2; Revelation 21:23

The Five Luminous Mysteries²⁰

Baptism in the Jordan: Joshua 3:11; Matthew 3:16; Genesis 7:11; Matthew 3:17; John 1:34; Joshua 4:14; Psalm 72:8; Genesis 9:15; Exodus 14:16; Exodus 14:13

The Manifestation at the Wedding at Cana: Ephesians 5:31-32; John 2:3; Jeremiah 13:12; Esther 1:7; John 2:9-10; John 2:11; Song 2:3-4; Isaiah 25:6; Joel 2:18; Zechariah 8:12

Preaching the Kingdom and Conversion: Psalm 119:130; Psalm 119:18; Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 1:18; Genesis 12:1; Matthew 5:2-3; Mark 1:14; Psalm 69:9; Isaiah 61:1; Isaiah 61:2

The Transfiguration: Exodus 16:10; Exodus 40:34; Mark 9:2; Matthew 17:2; John 1:45; Luke 9:30-31; Matthew 17:5; Matthew 17:6; Matthew 17:7; Psalm 104:1-2

The Institution of the Eucharist: Exodus 12:26-27; Malachi 1:11; Exodus 24:11; Psalm 78:24-25; Matthew 26:20; Luke 22:15; Luke 22:19; Matthew 26:27-28; John 6:55-56; Acts 2:42

²⁰ These mysteries were proposed in 2002 by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Accessed 04/30/2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/apost_letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae.html

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden: Matthew 26:38; Sirach 2:1; Psalm 55:4-5; Jeremiah 4:19; Jeremiah 18:19; Jeremiah 20:10; Lamentations 3:16-17; Jeremiah 23:9-20; Psalm 40:7-8; 1 Samuel 15:22

The Flagellation: John 18:40, 19:1; Wisdom 2:19; Wisdom 2:14-15; Lamentations 1:12; Isaiah 53:5; Psalm 129:3; Lamentations 3:1-3; Sirach 2:5; Psalm 22:6; Nehemiah 9:31

The Coronation of Thorns: Matthew 27:28-29a; Matthew 27:29b; Matthew 27:30; Sirach 2:5; Sirach 3:19; Sirach 11:4; Isaiah 52:14; Isaiah 53:2; Isaiah 53:3a; Isaiah 53:3b

The Carrying of the Cross: Genesis 22:6; Lamentations 5:5-13; Isaiah 53:7; Isaiah 53:4; Lamentations 4:2; Lamentations 4:7-8; Lamentations 3:7-9; Lamentations 4:14, 15; Psalm 129:2; John 19:17

The Crucifixion and death of the Lord: Luke 23:32-33; Psalm 74:3-4; John 19:26-27; Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 2:14; Genesis 22:8; Revelation 5:6; Revelation 14:1; John 19:34; Revelation 22:1

The Five Glorious Mysteries

Christ's Resurrection from the dead: Psalm 68:1; Matthew 5:4; John 16:20, 22; Matthew 28:5-6; Luke 12:32; John 16:32-33a; John 16:33b; John 20:19-20; Hebrews 12:11

Christ's Ascension into Heaven: Matthew 28:18, 20; John 14:1-2; Hebrews 13:14; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 9:24; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Hebrews 1:13; Song 3:11

The descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles: John 14:16-17; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 6:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Isaiah 11:1-3*; James 3:17; Romans 8:15-16; Romans 8:22-23; Romans 8:26

Mary's Assumption into Heaven: Luke 1:46-48; Luke 1:48, 51; Song 2:10-11; Song 3:6-7; Revelation 11:19; Judith 15:9-10; Sirach 24:2; Song 2:14; Psalm 45:10; Psalm 45:13-15

The Coronation of Mary, Queen of Earth and Heaven: Song 8:5; Luke 1:30-33; Luke 1:41-42; John 2:5; Judith 13:18-19; Revelation 12:1; Song 6:9; Song 6:10; Song 4:12; Song 4:13-15

As we saw with the Angelus, we can also meditate on each of these mysteries using an Ignatian prayer method: imagine yourself in the scene. What was the landscape like? What sounds did Jesus or Mary hear? In a particular mystery, it's possible to imagine the emotions we share with the people involved in the biblical stories. When did God come to us unexpectedly, as he did for Mary? Where are the painful places in our lives where we feel like we're carrying a cross? Where have we felt a surge of inspiration like the disciples on the day of Pentecost? How have we felt when we've found something or someone precious we thought we'd lost, as Mary did in the temple in Jerusalem?

But this is not the only way to consider these Mysteries. Instead of assigning an event from the life of Mary and Jesus to each decade, you can assign particular subjects for meditation, reciting *Hail Marys* over the beads as you contemplate these particular themes. The repetitive form of this attention makes you less susceptible to distractions, and gradually forms a habit of prayer.

Here are a few suggestions for using the rosary for particular prayer intentions for people or subjects of meditation.

Prayers of thanksgiving

For the gift of life

For the love of our family and friends

For our church community

For our homes and our food

For our mentors and guides over the years

Prayers for those in need

For single people

For the sick and suffering

For the discouraged or desperate

For world peace

For those who have no one to pray for them

You can also use prayers to focus on particular emotions or virtues that you'd like to develop in yourself, or that you'd like to see increase or decrease in other people you love:

The gift of joyful emotions

The gift of trust

The gift of courage

The gift of cooperative spirit

The gift of serenity

The gift of purpose

Emancipation from negative emotions

Emancipation from the spirit of distrust

Emancipation from the spirit of fear

Emancipation from the desire to dominate others

Emancipation from anxiety

Emancipation of a carefree spirit

Here's a final prayer that sums up the intention of these Marian devotions in a way that - like Mary herself - draws attention to the source of our salvation and the hope of eternal life.

O God, whose only-begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, obtained for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that by meditating on these mysteries through the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary in hymns



The hymns below are new translations of Latin or English-language hymns into French. For some of them a tune is suggested.

Vous qui avez foi en Jésus

Air : JULION, *Hymnal 1982 #268*

Texte : Vincent Stuckey Stratton Coles (1845-1929), *All who claim the faith of Jesus*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

1 Vous qui avez foi en Jésus
Chantez les miracles vus
Quand l'amour de Dieu le Père
Sur la mort l'a emporté,
Quand Dieu rendit Marie mère
Et son Fils lui a donné.

*1 All who claim the faith of Jesus
Sing the wonders that were done
When the love of God the Father
O'er our sins the vict'ry won,
When God made the Virgin Mary
Mother of the only Son.*

2 Bienheureux fut le peuple élu
Chez qui le Seigneur parut ;
Bienheureux le pays promis
Formé pour qu'il y logeât ;
Mais plus heureuse est celle qui
Vierge en son sein le porta.

*2 Blessed were the chosen people
Out of whom the Lord did come;
Blessed was the land of promise
Fashioned for His earthly home;
But more blessed far the mother,
She who bore Him in her womb.*

3 Que tout le peuple saint uni
Chante son nom tant béni ;
Que l'Église en elle entrevue
Partage en joie ses faveurs ;
Ce que l'heureuse Marie crut
Les chrétiens chantent en chœur :

*3 Therefore let all faithful people
Sing the honor of her name;
Let the Church, in her foreshadowed,
Part in her thanksgiving claim;
What Christ's mother sang in gladness
Let Christ's people sing the same:*

4 « Mon âme exalte le Seigneur ;
Exulte en Dieu mon Sauveur ;
Tous les âges me béniront !
Pour lui j'élève ma voix ;
Les forts, le Seigneur les confond,
Des humbles il fait le choix. »

*4 "Magnify, my soul, God's greatness;
In my Savior I rejoice;
All the ages call me blessed,
In His praise I lift my voice;
God has cast down all the mighty,
And the lowly are His choice."*

Chantons la Mère bénie

Air : ABBOT'S LEIGH, *Hymnal 1982* #379

Texte : G. B. Timms, *Sing we of the blessed Mother* (1975) trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

1 Chantons la Mère bénie
Que salua Gabriel,
Qui à sa voix libre porta
Par amour le Dieu du ciel ;
Chantons les joies de Marie
Qui a nourri de son sein
L'Enfant même de l'Éternel,
La Manne des temps anciens !

*1 Sing we of the blessèd Mother
who received the angel's word,
and obedient to his summons
bore in love the infant Lord;
sing we of the joys of Mary
at whose breast that child was fed
who is Son of God eternal
and the everlasting Bread.*

2 Oh ! chantons aussi ses peines,
L'épée qui perça son cœur,
Lorsque sous la croix de Jésus
Elle eut son poids de douleur.
Voyant son Fils et Messie
Régner depuis l'arbre mort
Elle connut le terrible prix
Versé pour régler nos torts.

*2 Sing we, too, of Mary's sorrows,
of the sword that pierced her through,
when beneath the cross of Jesus
she his weight of suffering knew,
looked upon her Son and Saviour
reigning high on Calvary's tree,
saw the price of man's redemption
paid to set the sinner free.*

3 Rechantons encor sa joie
Lorsqu'elle vit Christ vivant,
Qu'en prière avec ses amis
Elle attendait ce moment :
Du ciel la brûlante gloire
Du Saint Esprit descendit,
Souffle saint de l'être divin,
Qu'en vent, qu'en flammes l'on vit.

*3 Sing again the joys of Mary
when she saw the risen Lord,
and in prayer with Christ's apostles,
waited on his promised word:
from on high the blazing glory
of the Spirit's presence came,
heavenly breath of God's own being,
manifest through wind and flame.*

4 Chantons sa plus grande joie !
Son temps sur terre accompli,
Quand son Seigneur, Dieu d'elle né,
Au sein du ciel l'accueillit.
Ô Mère, sainte Marie,
Par grâce exaltée très haut !
Que ton Fils et notre Sauveur,
Montre à tous ses traits si beaux.

*4 Sing the chiefest joy of Mary
when on earth her work was done,
and the Lord of all creation
brought her to his heavenly home:
Virgin Mother, Mary blessèd,
raised on high and crowned with grace,
may your Son, the world's redeemer,
grant us all to see his face.*

De Marie qu'on publie

Air : DAILY, DAILY, Air du Tyrol ; *Darmstadt Gesang-Buch*, 1699

Texte : *De Marie qu'on publie* (XIX^{ème} siècle) révisé par Joris Bürmann (2024)

De concert avec les anges,
Nous voulons, Mère de Dieu,
Célébrer par nos louanges
Tes triomphes glorieux.

Refrain

**De Marie qu'on publie
Et la gloire et les grandeurs,
Qu'on l'honore, qu'on l'implore :
Ô servante du Seigneur !**

En elle la créature
Est toute grâce et beauté,
Elle a pour toute parure,
Le Seigneur et sa clarté.

C'est le lys de la vallée ;
Son parfum délicieux
Sur la terre désolée
Réjouis le Roi des cieux.

C'est le noble sanctuaire
Que le Dieu de majesté
Inonda de sa lumière,
Embellit de sa beauté.

C'est la Vierge incomparable ;
C'est la gloire d'Israël ;
De son sein pour le coupable
Le pardon est né du ciel.

Cette Mère bien-aimée,
Qu'ici-bas nous acclamons,
Plus terrible qu'une armée
Met en fuite les démons.

Pour tout dire, c'est Marie !
D'elle naît tant de douceur :
D'elle vient l'espoir, la vie :
C'est l'aurore du bonheur.

Étoile de la mer, salut !

Air : AIR DES MARINS, *Quimper* #106

Texte : *Ave Maris Stella* (IX^{ème} siècle) trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

58

106 – Gwerc’hez, Rouanez an Arvor

P. BOURDOULOUS

air des marins

REFRAIN

Gwer.c’hez, Rou - a - nez an Ar - vor, Roït ho pen - noz d’an dud a

Musical notation for the first system of the refrain, featuring a treble and bass clef with a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef.

vor; Pe - dit, pe - dit ho Mab Je - zuz Da ve - za ou - zomp tru - e -

Musical notation for the second system of the refrain, continuing the melody and accompaniment.

- zuz A - ve, Ma - ris Stel - la Dè - i Ma - ter Al - ma.

Musical notation for the third system of the refrain, concluding the melody and accompaniment.

Harm. M. DECKER

Étoile de la mer, salut !
Mère nourricière de Dieu !
Vierge tu nous donnes Jésus,
Bienheureuse porte des cieux.

*Ave, maris stella,
Dei mater alma,
atque semper virgo,
Felix cæli porta.*

Ref. Ave Maris Stella, Dei Mater Alma

L'*Ave* par toi fut accueilli
De la bouche de Gabriel.
Dans la paix tu nous affermis
D'Ève inversant le nom mortel.*

*Sumens illud « Ave »
Gabrielis ore,
funda nos in pace,
mutans Evæ nomen.*

Que tu es mère, fais-le voir !
Montre que ce Dieu pour nous né
Peut par toi nos vœux recevoir
Car tout à toi il s'est donné.

*Monstra te esse matrem,
sumat per te precem
qui pro nobis natus
tulit esse tuus.*

À la vraie vie élève-nous,
Protège-nous sur nos chemins.
Qu'en voyant Jésus, notre Tout,
Nous soyons tout joyeux enfin.

*Vitam præsta puram,
iter para tutum,
ut videntes Jesum
semper collatetur.*

Louange au Père, notre Dieu,
Gloire au Fils, Jésus, le Très-Haut,
Honneur à l'Esprit en tous lieux,
Dans les temps anciens et nouveaux !

*Sit laus Deo Patri,
summo Christo decus,
Spiritu Sancto
tribus honor unus.*

* Jeu de mot en latin, *Ave*, la salutation angélique est l'anagramme de *Eva*, Ève.

Le Dieu que terre, mer et cieux

Air : KELVEN, *Quimper* #105

Texte : Venance Fortunat (530-609) *Quem terra, pontus, aethera*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

*GUILLOU Air et accompagnement au N° 140, page 75 *air: Kelven*

105 - Itron Varia Rumengol

GUILLOU

1. Li - li ar - c'han - tet o de - liou, War ribl au dour 'zo er pra -
- jou; Dou - e d'e - zo 'ro - as dil - had A skuilh er mae - ziou pep c'houez -
REFRAIN
- vat. I - tron Va - ri - a Ru - men - gol, Gwerc'hez gal - lou - dus re - med
holl, Roit deomp hi - rio, en han' Dou - e, Ye c'hed ar c'horf hag an e - ne.

rit.

**Ref Gloire à Jésus notre Seigneur
Qui d'une mère vierge est né
Gloire au Père, au Consolateur
Gloire, gloire au Dieu incarné !**

*Iesu, Tibi sit gloria,
qui natus es de Virgine,
cum Patre, et almo Spiritu,
in sempiterna saecula.*

1 Le Dieu que terre, mer et cieux,
Prêchent, louent, par le monde entier,
Lui qui règle leur triple jeu
Le corps de Marie de l'a porté.

*Quem terra, pontus, aethera
colunt, adorant, praedicant,
trinam regentem machinam
claustrum Mariae baiulat.*

2 Lui qu'astres, lunes et soleils
Servent à travers tous les temps
Comblé de la grâce du ciel
C'est un sein vierge qui l'attend !

*Cui Luna, Sol, et omnia
deserviunt per tempora,
perfusa caeli gratia,
gestant puellae viscera.*

3 Heureuse mère, dans ton sein,
Par ce présent, le Dieu très haut,
Qui tient le monde dans sa main
Comme en l'Arche se trouve enclos.

*Beata mater munere,
cuius supernus artifex,
mundum pugillo continens,
ventris sub arca clausus est.*

4 Heureuse, tu reçois l'amour
Fructueuse du Saint Esprit
Tes entrailles ont mis au jour
L'espoir des Juifs et des Gentils.

*Beata caeli nuntio,
fecunda Sancto Spiritu,
desideratus gentibus,
cuius per alvum fusus est.*

Joyeuse lumière des cieux

Air : 8888

Texte : Léon XIII (1810-1903), *O lux beata cœlitum et summa spes*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

1 Joyeuse lumière des cieux,
Sûre espérance des humains,
Jésus, un foyer chaleureux
Te sourit au premier matin.

*O Lux beata cœlitum
Et summa spes mortalium,
Iesu, o cui domestica
Arrisit orto caritas.*

2 Comble de grâce tu as pu
Marie, seule, ton Dieu bercer,
Allaitant de ton sein Jésus
Et le couvrant de tes baisers.

*Maria, dives gratia,
O sola quæ casto potes
Fovere Iesum pectore,
Cum lacte donans oscula.*

3 Joseph, d'un vieux lignage élu
Pour de la Vierge être gardien ;
Du doux nom de Père on a vu,
T'appeler ton enfant divin.

*Tuque ex vetustis patribus
Delecte custos Virginis,
Dulci patris quem nomine
Divina Proles invocat.*

4 De Jessé nobles rejetons,
Couple par qui l'amour renaît,
En prière que nous soyons,
Auprès de vous où Dieu se plaît.

*De stirpe Iesse nobili
Nati in salutem gentium,
Audite nos qui supplices
Vestras ad aras sistimus.*

5 Que la grâce de ces vertus
Qui ont fleurit votre maison
Pousse chez nous pour que Jésus
Y grandisse en sagesse, en dons.

*Qua vestra sedes floruit
Virtutis omnis gratia,
Hanc detur in domesticis
Referre posse moribus.*

6 Gloire à Jésus ! pour nous sauver
Tu veux bien obéir aux tiens.
Gloire au Père, sans fin loué !
Gloire toujours à l'Esprit Saint !

*Iesu, tuis oboediens
Qui factus es parentibus,
Cum Patre summo ac Spiritu,
Semper tibi sit gloria.*

Ô glorieuse femme

Air : 8888

Texte : Venance Fortunat (530-609), *O gloriosa femina, excelsa super sidera*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

O glorieuse femme qui
Des astres surpasse l'éclat
De ton sein sacré tu nourris
Dieu qui avec soin te créa.

*O gloriosa femina,
excelsa super sidera,
qui te creavit provide,
lactas sacro ubere.*

Le fruit qu'Ève triste perdit
De toi germe fruit nourricier ;
Pour les pauvres tu aplanis
De la terre au ciel un sentier.

*Quod Eva tristis abstulit,
tu reddis almo germine ;
intrent ut astra flebiles,
sternis benigna semitam.*

Sainte porte du Roi très haut,
Ô Vierge, seuil étincelant !
Par toi viennent des temps nouveaux
Peuples, célébrez triomphants !

*Tu regis alti ianua
et porta lucis fulgida ;
vitam datam per Virginem,
gentes redemptae, plaudite.*

Gloire au Père et au Saint Esprit !
Gloire à ton Fils ! et ton enfant,
Qui t'ont fait le plus bel habit
Te couvrant de grâce en tout temps !

*Patri sit et Paraclito
tuoque Nato gloria,
qui veste te mirabilia
circumdederunt gratiae.*

Ô Vierge mère et fille

Air : 7878

Texte : Anselmo Lentini (1901-1989), *O Virgo mater filia*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

Ô Vierge mère et fille
Bienheureuse de ton Fils,
La plus noble, la plus humble,
Parmi tout ce que Dieu fit.

*O Virgo Mater, Filia
tui beata Filii,
sublimis et humillima
præ creaturis omnibus,*

On te trouve en la pensée
Divine avant tous les temps ;
Toi, de notre être apogée
Et parfait achèvement.

*Divini tu consilii
fixus ab ævo terminus,
tu decus et fastigium
naturæ nostræ maximum:*

Tu nous l'as rendu si noble
Que le créateur divin
En toi – quel art admirable ! –
A voulu se faire humain.

*Quam sic prompsisti nobilem,
ut summus eius Conditor
in ipsa per te fieret
arte miranda conditus.*

Dans ton sein vierge et modeste
L'ardent amour a brûlé :
Sa chaleur des fleurs célestes
Sur la terre a fait pousser.

*In utero virgineo
amor revixit igneus,
cuius calore germinant
flores in terra calici.*

Au Père, au Fils de Marie
À l'Esprit gloire à jamais !
Qui une Vierge ont fleurie,
Pour porter un fruit parfait !

*Patri sit et Paraclito
tuoque Nato gloria,
qui veste te mirabili
circumdederunt gratia.*

Tous temps et lieux reconnaissez

Air : 8888

Texte : Venance Fortunat ? (530-609), *Agnoscat omne saeculum*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

Tous temps et lieux reconnaissez
Le prix de la vie nous revient :
De l'ennemi le joug passé
La liberté parut enfin !

*Agnoscat omne saeculum
Venisse vitae praemium,
Post hostis asperi iugum
Apparuit redemptio.*

Ce qu'Ésaïe avait prédit
En la Vierge se modela ;
L'ange Gabriel le lui dit
Et le Saint Esprit la combla.

*Esaias quae praecinit
completa sunt in virgine,
annunciavit Angelus,
Sanctus replevit Spiritus.*

En son ventre Marie conçut
Féconde d'un verbe de foi ;
Et ce que rien n'a contenu
Dans le sein d'une fille croît.

*Maria ventre concipit
verbi fidelis semine:
Quem totus orbis non capit
Portant puellae viscera.*

Tout ce qu'a pollué Adam,
Le nouvel Adam le lava ;
Ce que fit tomber l'arrogant,
Le plus humble le releva.

*Adam vetus quod polluit
Adam novus hoc abluit,
Tumens quod ille deicit
Humillimus hic erigit.*

Toute gloire soit à Jésus !
Au Dieu qui est parent du Christ
Que l'heureuse Vierge conçut
Quand l'Esprit d'ombre la couvrit.

*Christo sit omnis gloria,
Dei Parentis Filio,
quem Virgo felix concipit
Sancti sub umbra Spiritus.*

Quand les humains enténébrés

Air : 8888

Texte : Prudence (348-413), *Iam caeca vis mortalium*, trad. Joris Bürmann (2024)

Quand les humains enténébrés
Croyaient à des contes trompeurs,
Ils se formaient leurs déités
De bois, de pierres et de peur.

*Iam caeca vis mortalium
venerans inanes nenas
vel aera vel saxa algida,
vel ligna credebat Deum.*

Quand ce chemin traître ils suivaient
Ils s'offraient aux coups du brigand,
Et leur vie esclave plongeait
Au fond de l'abîme fumant.

*Haec dum sequuntur, perfidi
praedonis in ius venerant,
et mancipatam fumido
vitam barathro inmerserant:*

Mais le Christ ne put supporter
Cette ruine où tombaient les gens,
Quoi ! Ce que son Père a créé
Pourrait périr impunément ?

*Stragem sed istam non tulit
Christus cadentum gentium
inpune ne forsani sui
Patris periret fabrica.*

Il s'associe un corps mortel
Afin que ce corps relevé
De la mort brise un lien cruel
Et rende à Dieu l'humanité.

*Mortale corpus induit,
ut excitato corpore
mortis catenam frangeret
hominemque portaret Patri.*

Voici l'anniversaire ô Christ !
Le jour où le Dieu des éclairs
D'un souffle à la glaise t'unit
Mêlant sa parole à la chair.

*Hic ille natalis dies,
quo te creator arduus
spiravit et limo indidit
sermone carnem glutinans.*

Ô quelle joie pour l'univers
Le sein d'une Vierge contient :
L'âge d'or en elle prend chair
Et brillent de nouveaux matins !

*O quanta rerum gaudia
alvus pudica continet,
ex qua novellum seculum
procedit et lux aurea!*

Toute gloire à toi, ô Jésus !
Qui pour nous de la Vierge est né
Au Père, à l'Esprit soit rendu
Même honneur pour l'éternité !

*Iesu, tibi sit gloria,
qui natus es de Virgine,
cum Patre et almo Spiritu
in sempiterna saecula.*

Qu'aujourd'hui nos chants soient pour elle

Air : 8f.8.8f.8.

Texte : Archer Thompson Gurney (1820–1887), *Vêpres de l'Église anglicane*, Hymne #54, Paris, 1859.

Qu'aujourd'hui nos chants soient pour elle,
La Vierge qui, choisie aux cieux,
Remplit humble, sage et fidèle,
Tout son destin mystérieux.

Elle était pure, elle était sainte :
Oh ! descendons dans notre cœur !
Comme elle, avons-nous bien la crainte
De toutes les lois du Seigneur ?

Forte en sa foi, simple en sa gloire,
Sa chaste gloire d'obéir,
Son front se levait pour tout croire
Et s'inclinait pour tout souffrir.

Seigneur qui as béni Marie,
Berce nos cœurs tumultueux
Et que les peines de la vie
Nous mènent au repos des cieux.

Un cœur pur seul voit votre face,
Ô trois fois Sainte Trinité !
De la Vierge pleine de grâce
Donne-nous donc la pureté !

Other Francophone Marian hymns easily found online:

- ❖ « Humble servante du Seigneur »
- ❖ « La première en chemin »
- ❖ *Ave Maria* de Lourdes
- ❖ « Mère de l'Espérance » (Sanctuaire de Pontmain)

