

“Bride of My Heart,” Jesus Called Her

Was Sister Mildred a chosen soul in a mystical marriage with Christ?

In the Old and the New Testament, the love of God for man, and, in particular His relations with His chosen people (whether of the Synagogue or of the Church), are frequently typified under the form of the relations between bridegroom and bride. In like manner, Christian virginity [has] been considered from the earliest centuries as a special offering made by the soul to its spouse, Christ. ...These primitive notions were afterwards developed more completely, and the phrase *mystical marriage* has been taken in two different senses, the one wide and the other more restricted.
<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09703a.htm>

In the Foreword to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil’s Diary, her spiritual director, Bishop Paul F. Leibold, of the Cincinnati, Ohio diocese spoke of *mystical experiences* Sister began to have around 1938, such as flights of the spirit, interior locutions, special espousals with Christ, designation as the Little White Dove, etc. We recall that Mildred Marie Neuzil was born on August 2, 1916 and on September 12, 1930, at age fourteen, entered the religious congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood. She took First Vows in 1933 at the age of 17 and received the name of Sister Mary Ephrem. Thereafter, she was sent to multiple locations in the Washington, D.C. area, the focal point of Our Lady of America’s final request to her beloved sons, our bishops. In 1937, she was sent to Cincinnati where George J. Rehring, who would become vital to Sister’s mission for Our Lady, was Auxiliary Bishop. In 1939 she took Final Vows, becoming, in language common to consecrated women, the Bride of Christ. By the 1940’s she was having mystical experiences, locutions with Jesus and Mary in which she came to understand her mission was for the sanctification of the family, which later messages revealed would be achieved through imitation of the humble, simple virtues of the Holy Family who lived unceasingly in the Presence of the Holy Trinity.



“Your mission is vast, my child. It reaches to the ends of the earth. It will continue until time is no more, because there will always be the need for the sanctification of the family and of souls. Fear not, small one, for it is through the most unlikely of instruments that God works His wonders. He chooses where the world would not. He makes that possible which the world deems impossible. He stops, where the world would pass on. God has no need of anyone yet He chooses the smallest of the small for His glory.

Sweet child, let your humble heart be filled with a great confidence for my Son is in love with your lowliness and simplicity of heart. Make known to souls the preference my Son has for humility. Behold, I, His humble Mother, always looked upon myself as His lowly Handmaid, ready, at all times, to do His bidding. The humble, so greatly loved by Him, are also, in deed and in truth, my children.” (June 5, 1957 letter.)

“My Son is in love with your lowliness...”, another reference to that intimate relationship of Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem’s) soul with Christ in what some term *divine espousal or mystical marriage*. In another June 5, 1957 letter, Jesus calls Sister “Bride of My Heart,” “My Spouse,” and Himself “your Divine Spouse.” He addresses her as a

sacrificial soul and the gift of her life as a **“holocaust.”** Is He not identifying her as a **victim soul**?



“My little, white dove, the evil spirits have been let loose upon the earth because love has grown cold in the hearts of men. Only sacrificial souls will be able to cast them forth into the infernal abyss from which they have come forth.

Bride of My Heart, let love be the sacrificial altar of your holocaust. Behold the Furnace of Love, the Heart of your Divine Spouse. Lead to this Eternal Fire, oh My Spouse, which burns incessantly in My Adorable Heart, all those who are willing to sacrifice themselves to that Everlasting Love, Who first sacrificed Himself for them.”

The Bishops’ study of May 7, 2020 on the apparitions of Our Lady of America questioned the supernatural nature of Sister’s experiences and the holiness of her life, so let’s explore what **mystical marriage** and **divine espousal** mean in terms of holiness of life. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, New Advent.org, Christian virginity has been considered from the earliest centuries as a special offering made by the soul to its spouse, Christ. Early writers spoke of the **mystical nuptials** of saints like St. Agnes and St. Catherine of Alexandria, which later came to be known as **mystical marriage**. The term has two different senses, a wide sense and a restricted sense. Many saints experienced mystical marriage in the wide sense, which consisted of a vision in which Christ tells the soul He takes it for His bride and presents a ring during a ceremony in which the Blessed Mother, saints and angels are present. A gift is bestowed, an augmentation of charity and familiarity with God and trust in His providence. As a wife shares in the life of her husband, and as Christ suffered for the redemption of mankind, the mystical spouse enters into a more intimate participation in Christ’s sufferings for the salvation of souls. **In three cases out of four, mystical marriage is granted to stigmatics.** It has been estimated that seventy-seven mystical marriages have been reported from earliest times to the present among female saints, e.g., St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Mary Magdalen de’Pazzi, St. Veronica Giuliani, Venerable Maria de Agreda, and more.

In a more restricted sense, as employed by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, mystical marriage is the most exalted condition attainable by the soul in this life. It is called “transforming union,” “consummate union,” or “deification.” For those familiar with St. Teresa of Avila’s **Interior Castle**, this exalted condition of intimate union is called the **“seventh resting place”** which has three elements: 1) an almost continual sense of the presence of God even while absorbed in performing one’s duties; 2) a transformation of the higher faculties with a consciousness that in its supernatural acts of intellect and will, the soul participates in the Divine life and the analogous acts of God in a kind of fusion of two lives; and 3) a habitual vision of the Blessed Trinity or some Divine attribute. Understanding a bit more of this mystical reality in the lives of saints within the Church, we can now comprehend more deeply what Jesus asked of Sister Mildred Neuzil when He made her His Bride and laid her on the altar of sacrifice, and asked her to wear His crown of thorns and to allow herself to be nailed to His cross, uniting her intimately with His redemptive suffering for the salvation of souls. Those who knew her personally believe she had the interior stigmatic, which could only be ascertained if her body were exhumed.

Sister was sent to various locations with unusual frequency. These multiple locations, as Fr. Walter Abbott, S.J. had said, speak to the **national character of this apparition which Our Lady centered in the Catholic Church of our nation, our patronal Church, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., the only church or shrine she asked for.** After visions of the Archangel Michael in 1954 and Archangel Gabriel in 1955 and before the first appearance of Our Lady in 1956, Our Lord appeared to Sister inviting her to intimately share in His redemptive sufferings for the salvation of souls. She totally surrendered to His desire, no matter what He would ask of her. Her August 6, 1956 letter to Bishop Leibold states:



Jesus came to me holding a large cross and a crown of thorns. He said to me smiling, as though He knew what the answer would be (He did of course.) "I come with My cross and My crown of thorns, will you accept Me My spouse?" You know the only answer I could give, Father. Who could refuse Jesus anything?

During the night I awoke and Jesus said to me, and He said it with a profound emphasis: "I have placed you upon the Altar of Sacrifice." On June 14th, anniversary of my perpetual union with Jesus, He asked me again: "Bride of My Heart, do you still wish to suffer all things to give Me to souls?" I answered: "Yes, yes dear Lord, I am poor and wretched, and unworthy, but you know what is in my heart." He said, "My little white dove, will you then continue to wear the Crown of Thorns, and permit yourself to be nailed to the Cross?" I

told him in the best way I could, how much I desired Him to do with me just as He desired. So in this way my desires are wholly united to His.

While men might have trouble identifying with this intimate language of Christ with His consecrated virgins, the truth is, everyone of us must enter into an espousal, a covenant relationship with Christ that reflects God's espousal covenant with His people Israel, and Christ's covenant, spousal relationship with His Bride, the Church. As members of His Church, we individually enter into that magnificent communion of life and love even as the Church does as a whole. Heaven is a wedding feast of the Lamb of God with His Bride, the Church, all of us. There is no other marriage in heaven but that complete union of every soul with its God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Amen!

The More One's Life is Configured to the Passion of Jesus, the More We Can Trust in the Holiness of That Person. (Fr. Abbott)

O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father. (Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity.)



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