



By What Name Shall We Call Them? *Our Lady and Mildred Neuzil*

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38.)

No one has as many names as our Blessed Mother: Mary of Nazareth; Mary, full of grace; the Mother of Jesus; the Mother of God; the new Eve; the daughter of Zion; Theotokos; daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, etc. At every apparition Our Lady gains another name which indicates the Most Holy Trinity never ceases to delight in expounding her beauty and grace before us. At Fatima she called herself "I am the Lady of the Rosary." At Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception." In Mexico she is Our Lady of Guadalupe. During the Crusades, Peter Nolasco, inspired by Our Lady (Our Lady of Ransom, later called Our Lady of Mercy), founded the Mercedarian order to ransom Christians enslaved by the Moors. In Rwanda, she is called Our Lady of Kibeho, or Mother of the Word. Her titles are as boundless as is the favor God has bestowed upon her as His Mother, Mother of all the Living, Mother of the Church, Queen of Heaven and Earth. But for us here in America, she is most dear under the new title and image that expresses her favor to her children in America, in particular: "I am Our Lady of America," "I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling." She wishes to be enthroned in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, our patronal church, as "Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin." Most often, we just refer to Mary in prayer as Mama Mary, or as our Blessed Mother, or the Virgin Mary, or Our Lady, our Queen and our Mother. But the name given to her by her parents, divinely inspired, was "Mary," the same the angel Gabriel used to greet her.



The name "Mary" is an ancient name traced back to the Hebrew name, "Miryam" or "Myriam. In Aramaic it was Maryam. Moses and Aaron's sister's name was Myriam. The Greek translation of the Old Testament calls her *Mariam*, whereas with New Testament Greek she is *Maria*. Meanings for the name include *bitter, drop of the sea, rebellious, beloved, exalted; the name evokes feelings of strength, courage, and beauty*. Bitter sea speaks well to Mary's sea of sorrows as co-redemptrix in her Divine Son's redeeming

Passion and Death. Rebellious would refer more to Myriam, sister of Moses, during their time of slavery in Egypt. Beloved certainly defines Mary as the beloved of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, daughter of the Father, the apple of His eye; mother of the Son and the new Eve alongside the new Adam in his salvific work; and spouse of the Holy Spirit Who conceived in her womb the eternal Son of God-made-man. A Latin translation for drop of the sea became Stella Maris, giving Our Lady the title of "Star of the Sea."

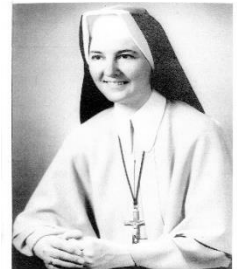
People have questioned Sister Mildred Neuzil's various names. She was born and baptized as **Mildred Marie** Neuzil. A letter from Sister Monica Schrott, who was a dear



contemplative friend, mentions that Sister Mildred's **Confirmation name was Theresa.** Ah, with such a strong name shared with two great mystics, Teresa of Avila and Therese of Lisieux, it is no wonder Mildred had such a mystical and contemplative soul. When she entered religious life with the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, Ohio, September 12, 1930, she took the name Sister Mary **Ephrem (black habit)**, a name that means *fruitful*. With the active order's modernization policies after Vatican II, many of the sisters returned to their baptismal names by which we are identified with

the royal, priestly and prophetic roles of Jesus Himself. At that point, some documents show Sister using the name of Sister **Mildred Marie** Neuzil, but a few years later she is using

Sister **Mildred Mary** Neuzil. All the later documents show her name as Sister **Mildred Mary** Neuzil, as on the cover of her **Diary**. At this time the



order had changed to the light gray habit shown to the right. Gradually, the order adopted secular clothing. When it was no longer possible to live a contemplative way of life within a very active and progressive order, the seven contemplative sisters wrote Pope Paul VI, requesting separation from the active order to form a new order while retaining their vows.

These sisters were never nuns, who make solemn vows, but religious sisters in simple vows. With increased hardships imposed on the

contemplative sisters and the delay from Rome, four of the seven contemplatives left the group, leaving three, "a little trinity," just enough to remain a canonically recognized organization. But, when Sister Florecita, the foundress of the cloister, died of a heart attack brought on by so much stress, only two remained, Sister Mildred and Sister Joseph Therese. Rome said it could not, therefore, grant the request to form a new canonical group. A canonical group must have at least three members. **With only two members left, the cloister would just cease to exist.** The letter from Rome gave the sisters two options: return to the active order or seek dispensation from their canonical vows. Returning to the active order was impossible after years of misunderstanding and hostility, documented in

"We Lived with a Saint," describing Sister Florecita's life. And since Sister Joseph Therese had never been in the active order, only the cloister, the two chose dispensation from canonical vows. The letter from Rome stated, **if they chose dispensation, they would be free to make private vows.** And so they did. **Now what do we call Mildred from then on, no longer a canonical religious nor a member of the Sisters of the Precious Blood?**

We continue to call her "Sister," not in a canonical sense but in the sense of being a member of a **religious association, living a common life for a religious purpose, and in private vow.** We were given to understand that such associations may refer to each other as sisters. Sister's second spiritual director, Father Edmund Morman, invited the two remaining sisters to make private vows before the Blessed Sacrament. He told them to go on living as the contemplative sisters they were. For that reason, we continue to refer to them as **sisters**, knowing full well it is not in a strict canonical sense. This letter, dated September 6, 2006,

from canon lawyer, Alan R. Kershaw, Ph.B., J.U.D., J.D., Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota in Rome, confirms this when it states:

Our Lady of the Nativity convent, once a papal enclosure at New Riegel, Ohio, has since become (circa 1980) a private association of the lay faithful, living out a religious life in accordance with Catholic Church law. "By private agreement among themselves, Christ's faithful have the right to constitute associations" of this kind (can. 299, *Codex Juris Canonica*), which do not require the approval of the local bishop. As you will recall, this was specifically confirmed by the Under Secretary, during our meeting.

Names play an important role in our lives. When we are given a mission, we are given a new name or title. Cephas' s name was changed to Peter when he was made head of Christ's Church. Saul's name became Paul when he was charged to take the Good News to the Gentile world. When a woman marries, she takes her husband's name and a new identity as his wife and eventual mother of his children. And what about nicknames? Jesus had special names for Sister: his little White Dove, Secretary of His Heart, and Bride of His Heart. Sister's given name, "**Mildred,**" has its origins in old English. It means **mild, gentle counselor, gentle strength**, a name that fits Sister Mildred's character and disposition so well. **She radiated peace and was ever so gentle, even with those who so badly misunderstood her contemplative vocation.** "**Theresa,**" her Confirmation name, comes from the French language and means "**harvester**" or "**late summer.**" It personifies virtue and reflects "**warmth and restorative punishment.**" How perfect for Sister Mildred whose second mission, after the renewal of the family, was to embrace a **life of expiation for the sins of others, to restore many to the grace they had lost.** Jesus tells us He knew us before we were knit in our mother's womb; He knows everything we have ever done. He calls us by name; we belong to Him. St. John Henry Newman shares his wisdom in this regard.



*Sister Mildred Mary
Neuzil - the last 20
years of her life*

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about."

"God has created all things for good; all things for their greatest good; everything for its own good. What is the good of one is not the good of another; what makes one man happy would make another unhappy. God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it me."

"A man would do nothing if he waited until he could do it so well that no one could find fault." (https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/24706.John_Henry_Newman)

Do you know what mission God has given you?

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