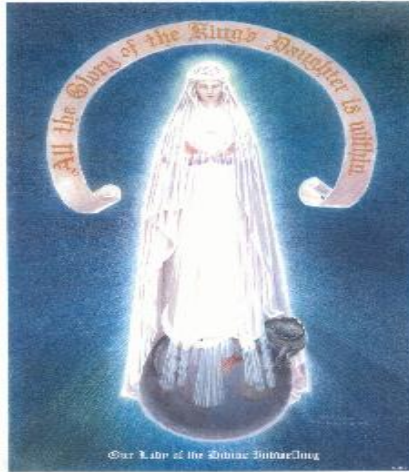


## Contemplating the Face of Jesus with Mary, His Mother



*Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling*©

At the beginning of the new Millennium and with the close of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 celebrating the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus, Blessed John Paul II urged us, in his apostolic letter **Novo Millennio Ineunte**, to put out into the deep, ***duc in altum***. He wasn't talking about merely setting sail on the waters of time on our journey of life, but of **diving into the oceans of God's mystery on our journey of Faith**. Speaking of the grace flowing from the Jubilee Year he said:

**"It is impossible to take the measure of this event of grace which in the course of the year has touched people's hearts. But certainly, "a river of living water", the water that continually flows "from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (cf. Rev 22:1), has been poured out on the Church. This is the water of the Spirit which quenches thirst and brings new life (cf. Jn 4:14). This is the merciful love of the Father which has once again been made known and given to us in Christ. At the end of this year we can repeat with renewed jubilation the ancient words of thanksgiving: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures forever."**

As a people, a church, bound to Christ in a covenant of love and mercy that is our pledge of future glory, we are caught up in the movement of the Incarnation, prepared for with God's mighty deeds throughout the generations, remembered in our present celebrations of His sacramental Presence, and lived out in service and conviction that all He has promised us will be ours. Jesus is God's gift of Himself to us, the Word by which all things were created; the Word made flesh in our midst so we might see the Face of God and touch His redeeming hand; the Word broken open for us at the Last Supper and on Calvary and made present on every Eucharistic table

wherein the Spirit of God transforms us into Christ's Mystical Body. Jesus assures us that no one will be deprived of seeing the Face of God or holding God's hand in the midst of his or her earthly sorrows, for He continues to perform His miracles of grace through us who are one Body with Him. This Jesus, Son of the living Triune God, walked among us precisely to pave the way for us to walk straight into the glory of His Father. We have a duty, therefore, to praise this Lord to Whom we owe our existence and Who alone can **promise and deliver** to us lasting peace and happiness. We have a duty to praise the Father Who sent His only begotten Son into our world precisely to die for us in order to re-create us in a new order of grace after we had so terribly destroyed the original harmony and order of creation by sin. The awesome mystery of God is rooted in the hunger pangs for Him inherent in our very nature which give testimony to our divine origin. This mystery of God is likewise imprinted on our history and on our world whose pride, in thinking it can achieve anything enduring without God, brings it ever closer to its own self destruction and forces it to its knees when all science and reason fail. The Truth is, as St. Paul says, **"In Him [God] we live and move and have our being."**

When asked what is the core legacy of the Great Jubilee, Blessed John Paul II answered that it was **"the contemplation of the face of Christ: Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life's journey."**

(Blessed John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, #15.)

**The contemplation of the face of Christ!** In his biography on the life of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure recounts how Francis received the stigmata in a vision of a Seraph with six fiery wings that descended from heaven. As the Seraph neared him, Francis saw between the wings the figure of a man crucified and fastened to a cross. Francis' heart was overwhelmed with joy **and** sorrow at the way Christ looked under the form of a Seraph. His heart burned with an unquenchable fire of love for Jesus that can only be described as equally seraphic. Christ looked so graciously upon Francis' passionate love for Him that He reciprocated by searing the sacred wounds of His bitter Passion into the willing flesh of this beloved man.

(Reference: Friar Jack Wintz, OFM, Friar Jack's E-spirations online.)

Could anyone have contemplated more or been more wounded by the Face of the crucified Christ than His own Mother who gave Him her flesh, felt Him kick in her womb, delivered Him to the world without the tarnish of sin or pain, kissed His baby cheeks and nursed His human growing pains? Could anyone have enjoyed more intimate communion with Him than she who spent every moment of his human life with Him, hidden in the sanctuary of God's paradise on earth in the little home of Nazareth, she who is espoused to the Holy Spirit? Could anyone have known the depths of His Passion as much as she whose heart and mind were so one with His that every blow to

His flesh was felt in her own? Was not the blood that flowed from His heart, pierced by a lance, the same blood she had given Him and which had flowed in spirit from her own Immaculate Heart, pierced by a prophetic sword? Could any torture be more cruel or any love more divine than that of Jesus, best known by His Mother? Who can know the secret of living in the Divine Presence or of being consumed by the living God more than she whom He Himself had designed with such tender and profound favor from all eternity so she might be the most magnificent temple, tabernacle and dwelling place for the Incarnate God? The two greatest mysteries of our Faith--the Trinity, God in Himself, and the Incarnation, God communicated to our nature—are inseparable from each other and, by God's own design, from the Immaculate Conception and all the other privileges bestowed upon the Woman who was chosen to be the Mother of God's Son, the new Eve and Mother of all mankind, our dear Mother of Mercy. This Woman shows us that the secret of the Divine Indwelling is humility and obedience to the will of God!

While private revelations are not binding upon our Faith, when not contrary to it, they lend such deep insight into the Omnipotence and Munificence of God. Venerable Mary of Agreda in **The Mystical City of God** speaks of God's preparation of Mary for her exalted position as Mother of the Son. She tells how God made a novena with Mary the nine days prior to the actual Incarnation in which He exalted her soul to the highest illuminations and secrets of the Trinity. Day by day she was given visions of the wondrous works of creation and of the fall and punishment of the angels and of the sin of man and the need for redemption. Venerable Mary of Agreda states it thus:

**This whole vision and all its effects the Most High arranged in such a way as to open up in the heart of Mary the deep trenches that were required for the foundations of the edifice, which He wished to erect in Her; namely, so high a one, that it would reach up to the substantial and hypostatic union of the human and divine nature. And as the dignity of Mother of God was without limits and to a certain extent infinite, it was becoming that She should be grounded in a proportionate humility, such as would be without limits though still within the bounds of reason itself. Attaining the summit of virtue, this blessed One among women humiliated Herself to such an extent, that the most holy Trinity was, as it were, fully paid and satisfied, and (according to our mode of understanding) constrained to raise Her to the highest position and dignity possible among creatures and nearest to the Divinity itself. In this highest benevolence his Majesty spoke and said to Her:**

**“My Spouse and Dove, great is my desire of redeeming man from sin and my immense kindness is as it were strained in waiting for the time, in which I shall descend in order to repair the world; ask Me continually during these days and with great affection for the fulfillment of this desire. Prostrate in my royal presence let not thy petitions and clamors cease, asking Me that the Onlybegotten of the Father descend in reality to unite Himself with the human nature.” Whereupon the heavenly Princess responded and said: “Lord and God**

eternal, whose is all the power and wisdom, whose wish none can resist (Esther 13, 9), who shall hinder thy Omnipotence? Who shall detain the impetuous current of thy Divinity, so that thy pleasure in conferring this benefit upon the whole human race remain unfulfilled? If perhaps, O my Beloved, I am a hindrance to such an immeasurable benefit, let me perish before I impede thy pleasure; this blessing cannot depend upon the merits of any creature; therefore, my Lord and Master, do not wait, as we might later on merit it so much the less. The sins of men increase and the offenses against Thee are multiplied; how shall we merit the very blessing, of which we become daily more unworthy? In Thee thyself, my Lord, exists the last cause and motive of our salvation; thy infinite bounty, thy numberless mercies incite Thee, the groans of thy Prophets and of the Fathers of thy people solicit thee, the saints sigh after Thee, the sinners look for Thee and all of them together call out to Thee; and if I, insignificant wormlet, on account of my ingratitude, am not unworthy of thy merciful condescension, I venture to beseech Thee, from the bottom of my heart, to speed thy coming and to hasten thy Redemption for thy greater glory.”

When the Princess of heaven had finished this prayer, She returned to her ordinary and more natural state; but anxious to fulfill the mandate of the Lord, She continued during that whole day her petitions for the Incarnation of the Word and with the deepest humility She repeated the exercises of prostrating herself to the ground and praying in the form of a cross. For the Holy Ghost, who governed Her, had taught Her this posture, by which She so highly pleased the most blessed Trinity. God saw, in the body of the future Mother of the Word, as it were the crucified person of Christ and therefore He received this morning sacrifice of the most pure Virgin as an advance offering of that of his most holy Son.

(Venerable Mary of Agreda, THE MYSTICAL CITY OF GOD, Tan Books and Publishers, Pgs. 28-30, Paragraphs 10, 11, and 12.)

In the message of Our Lady of America© given to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, we hear Our Lady address repeatedly man’s need for renewed and continual personal redemption and reform of life. We hear her plead with us to come to her to learn that humility and obedience and purity of heart that is so pleasing to her Son. We see such humility evident in her complete surrender to the Will of God lived out in the fulfillment of her duties of family life in the simple virtues practiced in her home in Nazareth where heaven truly reigned here on earth. We see her humility when, though greater than Joseph and all the angels and saints in the order of grace, she always deferred to Joseph in everything as head of the Holy Family. It was not she but Joseph who conveyed to Sister Mildred the “Secret of Secrets” of the Divine Indwelling in the soul. It is fitting we ponder it anew.

**Like His Holy Spouse, St. Joseph also never ceases to remind me of my first duty, the first duty of every soul, especially for the chosen, of living with God in the interior castle of our hearts. So on March 30th, before voicing his own requests, St. Joseph spoke of this first duty which comes before all others.**

**“It is time. Kneel my beloved daughter, for God is about to reveal to you a secret of the interior life. Few there are who learn it, and fewer they who live it in its fullness. This SECRET, dear child, is living with Him Who is within you and has made of your soul His Kingdom. There are many who know this Doctrine, but few to whom God reveals its secret operation. Few souls there are who empty themselves of all things that they may possess this SECRET OF SECRETS, this ultimate glory of all living, this union with the Divine, ending in Eternal Vision. This Secret cannot be written, lovely child. Its deepest meaning will be made known to you in the interior depths of your child-like soul, in your humble heart, where LOVE has found Its resting place, Its palace beautiful. They who would possess for themselves this mysterious workings of the Divine Secret must strive to cultivate in *silence* and *humility* this love for the Eternal Being within them. We lived this life, beloved child, so to attain it, souls must imitate as far as possible the fullness of our union with The Indwelling God.”**

**(Recorded in a letter to Father Leibold, her spiritual director, April 18, 1958.)**

It is so simple it is extraordinary! A pure and humble heart, the will of God, the duties of one’s vocation in life, the simple virtues of family life, the interior life! God first and above all. It is the Holy Family, the trinity on earth, that shows us just how simple and profound living with God can be. **“All the glory of the King’s daughter is within!”**

**“It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men.**

**As in our little home no sin was to be found, so it is the wish of the Heart of my Son and my Immaculate Heart that sin should, as far as possible, be unheard of in the homes of our children.**

**The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, you also will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace.”**

**(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, Pg. 8, November 8, 1954.)**

No one can truly contemplate the Face of Jesus without seeing the face of His Mother, for she is the image reflected back to us in the mirror of His countenance. We must sit at her feet in her school of prayer to gaze so lovingly upon Him with her disposition. Her prayer is always one of solitude, silence, communion and compassion, humility, simplicity, self-surrender and endless intercession for the Christ who suffered on Calvary and who continues to suffer in his brethren throughout the world and throughout time. Rev. Jean Lafrance sums it up beautifully for us.

... the role of Mary on Calvary is especially one of a contemplative presence in the sense that she, with eyes of her heart, looks at the one they have pierced through the heart. Her presence is primarily a silent presence; she does not say anything, like her Son, but the silence of the mother is infinitely more eloquent than words. Before the Cross, we must avoid idle talk and superficial feelings. We must simply look with intensity and in silence at the one who has no more the face of man, so disfigured is he by sin. It is a simple presence to what is.

But in Mary's look on Jesus on the Cross, there is infinitely more than a sharing of his human suffering. At that moment, she is wrenched from herself, and a power of attraction coming from the glorious Cross focuses her gaze completely on Jesus: "When I am raised from the ground, I will draw all men to me." Through this mystery apparently accessible to our human psychology, there is a mysterious and deeper reality. While contemplating, in the Holy Spirit, Jesus on the Cross and in glory, Mary is seized through the very simple and human sight of the dying Christ by the crucifying glorification which comes from the Risen Christ.

In the deepest recesses of her heart, she is crucified by Glory and glorified by the Cross. Her human gaze, intense with compassionate love for her Son, becomes the channel and the fruit of a purely interior holocaust. The Fathers of the East tell us in a somewhat special language that she crosses over from the order of grace to the order of glory. Since her conception, Mary was literally possessed by the love of God which plunged her into extraordinary abysses of humility, by making her accept the most hidden ordinary life. At the level of her conscience, this presence of God in her stirred desires which directed her toward a practically continual prayer.

(Rev. Jean Lafrance, IN PRAYER WITH MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS, Editions Paulines, Sherbrooke, QC, Pgs. 212-213.)

**And for whom does she offer this continual prayer?** It is for us, her other children, born by the same Holy Spirit who formed Christ in her womb and Who forms us by the waters of Baptism and the Bread of the Eucharist into the Mystical Body of her divine Son, so dearly loved by her, for in us she can only see Jesus and love Him all over again.

**Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.**

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