



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Marist Reflections for an Advent Journey with Mary, Our Good Mother

Marcellin Champagnat gave us the name of Mary to encourage us to live in “the way of Mary” because he wanted us to live according to her spirit. He called her “our Ordinary Resource” & urged the early brothers to regularly confide in her as they journeyed through life.

Relationships take time & to get to know a person better we must spend time with them. In doing so, we discover new aspects of a person & we learn to appreciate qualities in the person that were previously unknown. We also discover aspects of the person that attract us, aspects we might imitate.

The many titles given to Mary reveal her many traits. As Mother of us all, Mary transcends culture & position & embraces all of humanity. Her formal titles derive from teachings & beliefs of the Church.

During the Advent season, we have invited Marists, young & old, across the United States to share an aspect of Mary that has touched their lives, so that all of us may better appreciate all she means to us & together we might grow in relationship with her.

Mary was known to the early brothers as “Our Good Mother”, a title that we Marists of Champagnat still use two hundred years later. A Mother nurtures, guides & protects. We marvel at the depth & breadth of the love she has for all of us, her children.

It is our hope that using these daily reflections will lead you to discover new facets of Mary. May she journey with you during this Advent season...for she will surely lead you to her Son, Jesus.

Maranatha. Come Lord, Jesus.



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Monday, Day I Queen of Families

by Ellen Van Cleef, Jackson, KY

The title Queen of Families was added to the Litany of Loretto by Pope John Paul II, flowing from the idea that each home is a 'domestic church' where faith is first learned & loved. Naming Mary Queen of Families invites her specifically into our homes & asks her to guide our family life.

As Marists, this title prompts reflection on Mary's place in the daily goings-on of our families. It is a profound name for us because though family changes through births, deaths, partnerships, circumstances—Mary is there. Walking 'in the way of Mary' means that discipleship and family cannot be disentangled.

Making Jesus known and loved often happens through little gestures and the home is full of small chances for mercy, simplicity, and generosity. Let us pray that the Queen of Families will guide us to live our charism right here at home this Advent season.

What is one little thing you can do this Advent season to make Jesus known and loved in your immediate or extended family?

**Mary, Queen of Families ... Pray for us!**



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Tuesday, Day 2 Mother of Mercy

by Fernando Portilla, Bronx, NY

Mercy sets the framework for many of Jesus' teachings. At its core, Mercy is forgiveness and Jesus teaches us that we need to forgive others because God already forgives us as sinners.

However, Mercy can also be thought of as love for others even when we disagree with them. It is the kind of love that may hurt at first but in the end, it's all love.

God chose Mary to be the illustration of Mercy in our world. Mother of Mercy is a title given to Mary echoing the tender care, compassion and forgiveness she provided to all she encountered.

As Marists, we are called to find Jesus and salvation through Mary. We use her as an example of someone who led a difficult life but still practiced and held on to an unwavering faith and commitment to God's plan and message for us.

This Advent, how can you be more merciful?  
Do you need to seek Gods mercy in your own life?

**Mary, Mother of Mercy ... Pray for us!**



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Wednesday, Day 3 Untier of Knots

by Bro Rob Clark, Austin, TX

One of my human images of God is a grandmother: always loving, always available, always slipping me an undeserved \$5 when I left to go home! My grandmother also had the amazing ability to untie knots: whether my mother's necklaces, my father's fishing lines or any ropes that I managed to get tangled, she had the gentle and patient way to undo the knots.

It is doubtful that Saint Marcellin was aware of the image of our "Mary, Untier of Knots," but his lived-experience indicated that he would always turn to Mary "Our Good Mother" with the "knots" of his life, our early brothers, and the many complications during the foundation of the Little Brothers of Mary.

With Mary, Untier of Knots, as our "Ordinary Resource," Let us bring to her gentle and patient care the knots of our lives – whether tangled by ourselves or by others. Trusting that with her intercession and God's grace all our knots will be untied.

How can you spend time this advent on the tangled parts of your life? Can Mary be a resource for you to help free the knots that bind you?

**Mary, Untier of Knots ... Pray for us!**



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Thursday, Day 4 Morning Star

by Karen Merker, Kingston, NY

As a middle school science teacher in a Catholic school, I tried to add a faith element to science lessons when I could. The idea of Mary as the Morning Star fit right into my astronomy lesson!

The Morning Star is really the planet Venus, which is the last “star” in the sky before the sunrise. How fitting that Mary leads the way to the Light of Jesus!

During my years in Esopus as cook in the Mansion and the Retreat House, I would often get up early to go down to the Hudson to witness the sunrise. On some mornings, the Morning Star would precede the sunrise. It is through Mary (and things Marist) that I learned to have Jesus in my life.

Mary’s little “star” can lead us to her Son if we only pay attention.

What are the guiding stars in your life?  
Do you have people or signs that help point the way to  
what God is calling you to become?

Morning Star, Stella Matutina  
... Pray for us!



ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Friday, Day 5 Mother of the Disappeared

by Juan Antonio Solis, Brownsville, TX

Mary, Mother of the Disappeared is an image born in response to the growing number of people in Latin American countries that have “disappeared” at the hands of death squads. Dating as far back as 1976, the mothers of abducted family members in countries like Argentina silently protested the government’s inaction while wearing black dresses and white kerchiefs, holding photographs of their missing loved ones as a way to release their sorrow.

The white handprint smeared across the image is the signature of El Salvadorean death squads. On the surface, it appears to tarnish Mary’s image, but the handprint illustrates an ugly truth that must be tackled with conviction. Our Marist tradition calls us to face injustice anywhere it appears, even if it may be painful to do so. The truth is not always comfortable, but in this time of preparation, let that challenge us to action.

What about the in justice of the world around me makes  
me uncomfortable or outraged?  
How can i work to change it?

Madre de los Desaparecidos  
... Pray for us!





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Saturday, Day 6

### Visio Divina

Image by Bro Todd Patenaude, El Paso, TX

On Saturdays, we let go of words and let God speak through an image, a practice called Visio Divina. This Saturday, our image is an original creation located at our Marist Community in El Paso, TX. We invite you to spend a few minutes in silence contemplating this image of Mary.





ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

# Sunday, Day 7

## The Annunciation

by Madeline Picou, Homa, LA

“Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

The Annunciation - Luke 1:26-38

Imagine sitting in your room...late at night...waiting for sleep to come & an ANGEL shows up & beckons you to REJOICE! My imagination runs wild thinking about what my response would be to the news that I was to have a child born of the Spirit because I'm “favored” and this was to be a blessing!

This year has invited our world to react & respond to being asked to do the impossible. We have stopped, sheltered in place, created a “new normal” way of life. Mary, our Mother is the ultimate role model for these trying times. Mary Robichaux, a dear friend was recently handed a diagnosis of cancer. Both Mary's were surprised & caught off guard. Both have put all their trust in God & are transforming lives, faith, hope, & love.

How have we inverted this scripture & focused on the doubt & fear first? Where do we find courage to respond when the world around is filled with sickness, hate, & division?

How does this scripture invite you & I into the possibility that we are to REJOICE when being asked to do the impossible?

Can you, can I, can our Marist family say with a good heart, “You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.”





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Monday, Day 8

### Our Lady of Czestochowa

by Alice Miesnik, Bayonne, NJ

The famous icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa has been housed in a monastery in Poland since the 14th century.

Created perhaps as far back as the 6th century, the icon depicts Mary pointing to the Child Jesus, reminding us of “To Jesus through Mary”.

Knowing the history of the icon unveils further insights for today. The icon is called the “Black Madonna” since the face of Mary is blackened and bears two obvious scars.

Legend has it that fire and sword caused these indelible marks which consistently reappear despite restoration.

In these times of unrest caused by blatant racial inequality, it is good to set our eyes on an image of Mary that reminds us that Black lives do matter and that the scars of injustice do not easily fade away. She calls us to action.

What action can I take this Advent to create a more just world? How can I work for a more just community, or simply a more just relationship?

## Our Lady of Czestochowa ... Pray for us!



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Tuesday, Day 9 Perpetual Help

by Pedro Marti, Miami, FL

In the imagery of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, we are reminded of Christ seeking comfort & solace in the arms of His Mother. Confronted with the reality of the cruelties of the Cross, the Son of Man, with the help of His Mother, finds the strength and courage to triumphantly accomplish his mission at Calvary. As we prepare for the Incarnation of Christ in our hearts during the Advent season, let us remember that Christ points us to His Mother during times of duress. These past few months have been challenging in many ways for all of us, but we cannot forget to turn towards Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Just as Mary holds the hand of her Son, she will be there to take us by the hand and help us overcome any challenges we may face. Our Lady of Perpetual Help provides us with the reassurance that everything will be okay. It's inevitable that we will be faced with great challenges and adversities in our lives and ministries, but when we place our faith and trust in the right direction, triumph is also inevitable. Mary reminded Jesus of that very thing.

What do I need to ask for help with today?  
How can I reach out and offer help to others during this  
Advent season?

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help ... Pray for us!**



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Wednesday, Day 10 Our Lady of Hungary

by Dan O'Reilly, Queens, NY

Growing up with a Hungarian mother meant adoring goulash, sour cream, traditional folk music, and Our Lady of Hungary. On his deathbed, St. Stephen of Hungary, the first Christian king of the country, held his crown in his right hand and offered it out to Mary to protect his people. When his body was exhumed years later, his right hand, the hand he held out to Mary, was incorrupt; it had not, and still has not, decayed. Hungarians take this as assurance that Mary heard St. Stephen's last prayer and answers it to this day.

As Marists, we are told to trust Mary and that she should be "our ordinary resource," bringing all our needs to her so she can then go to her Son with them. St. Stephen and his Holy Right reminds me that what we bring to Our Lady of Hungary is not neglected, but heard and cherished.

What prayers do you have to bring to Mary today,  
knowing that they are heard?

How can you place more trust in Our Lady in your life?

## Our Lady of Hungary ... Pray for us!



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Thursday, Day II The Lost and Found

by Bro Hank Hammer, Chicago, IL

Our Lady of the Lost and Found is the title of a delightfully engaging novel by Diane Schoemperlen (Penguin Books: 2001). Although it is not an official title for Mary, it is a great metaphor for us to ponder in Advent especially when many of us find ourselves lost in the midst of the confusion and ripple effects of the Covid crisis.

Being lost is an uncomfortable feeling especially for those of us who may think we are in charge of our lives or who, until recently, always thought we knew where we were going. Rather than wander aimlessly, trying to find our way on our own, perhaps this Advent we can let ourselves be found by Mary. As we know from the life of Marcellin, who better than Mary can find us and lead us to Jesus?

When during these last few months have you felt lost?  
Are you open to being found by Mary? By Jesus?

Our Lady of the Lost and Found  
... Pray for us!



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

Friday, Day 12

## Star of the Sea

by Patrick Meyer, Chicago, IL

It is common for churches along the coast to be named Our Lady, Star of the Sea. This name comes from Mary being a guiding star for all. She shines bright, like all stars do, to help guide us on the right path. What more do our mothers want than for their children to be on the right path? Growing up my Grandmother belonged to Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Florida. She was a woman in my life that I consider my guiding light. I would not be the man I am today if it wasn't for her always setting me on the right path. She was so faithful, compassionate, strong, and devoted to Our Lady, Star of the Sea. I like to think that she was Marist without even knowing it.

Mary showed herself as a guiding light for St. Marcellin in the snowstorm. Her star shined bright in the lantern for him to be guided towards shelter. Whenever I am lost, confused, sad, scared, or anxious, I know that I can pray all to Jesus through Mary in order to see that guiding light.

What people or places in my life remind me of the light that God has placed within me?

Our Lady Star of the Sea ... Pray for us!





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

Saturday, Day 13

## Visio Divina

Photo by Jane Ann Carvalho, Roselle, NJ

On Saturdays, we let go of words and let God speak through an image, a practice called Visio Divina. This Saturday, our image is a photograph taken on a beach in Sandy Hook, NJ.

We invite you to spend a few minutes in silence contemplating this image of Mary.







# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Sunday, Day 14 The Visitation

by Vicki Blaszak, Lawrence, MA

"The moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

### The Visitation - Luke 1: 39-45

The story of the Visitation is one that always strikes me as so human. Mary, traveling the hillside, visits her older cousin and share in the joy of their pregnancies together. When I had the pleasure of being pregnant at the same time as my cousin our relationship took on a whole new meaning. For thousands of years women have come together in solidarity during this wonderfully terrifying experience of life.

The physicality of this visit highlights the humanity into which the Divine entered this world. When John the Baptist leaps in the womb, recognizing the presence of Jesus, this seemingly ordinary interaction becomes extraordinary. Mary is confirmed as Theotokos, and we continue to see how she is called to this phenomenal mission by God.

As we reflect on our own humanity during Advent, where in our life might we need to make room for the Divine? How have our relationships allowed us to encounter Jesus?



ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

# Monday, Day 15

## Queen of Martyrs

by Bro Dan O'Riordan, Queens, NY

Mary, our model of faith, always carried Jesus in either her arms or her heart. When she proclaimed her "Fiat," I suspect she never envisioned that her journey ahead would include standing at the foot of the cross to watch her broken and martyred son die. The image of "la Pieta" and her lovingly embracing a battered Jesus compels us to trust that Mary truly loves and holds all who follow her Son and suffer similar cruelties in her arms and heart as well.

We have had 185 Marist Brothers Martyrs, who died for their faith and their efforts to make Jesus Christ known and loved. These Brothers were killed in Algeria, China, Spain, Rwanda, and Zaire. I hope Mary accompanied each of these faithful witnesses to Heaven in her arms so they could be welcomed home and embraced by Christ, who surely said, "Welcome Home, good and faithful servants."

How might you embrace those in our world today who are broken, condemned, abandoned, or in need of Marial compassion and love?

Mary, Queen of Martyrs ... Pray for us!



ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Tuesday, Day 16

# Our Lady of Charity

by Fernando Machado, Miami, FL

As Marists we learn the story of the Memorare in the Snow. As a Cuban, I grew up listening to the story of how our Virgin Mother saved the lives of three humble fishermen caught in a storm while at sea. These three fishermen, much like Marcellin, prayed to Mary during the storm and were miraculously saved. One had been wearing a medallion of the Virgin and shortly after the storm a statue of the Virgin floated towards them.

When I was two years old my family took a great risk to flee from political oppression in Cuba. Four families including parents, kids and even a chihuahua boarded a 17 foot boat and made a great escape to freedom. We had, like good Cuban Catholics, prayed to Our Lady of Charity for her protection. No one less than my uncle, who carried with him a printed image of the Virgin under his shirt and right by his heart. Though the image likely was lost at some point during the voyage, my uncle still claims that the image was imprinted on his soul. We made it safely! May we as Marists always call to Mary as our refuge in times of great turbulence.

What are the storms in my life right now?

Do I trust in Mary's protection when the turbulence  
becomes overwhelming?

Our Lady of Charity, Patroness of Cuba  
... Pray for us!



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Wednesday, Day 17 Refuge of Sinners

by Ed Kennedy, Esopus, NY

When I look at Mary as a refuge then I realise I am a refugee. My sin at times causes me to hide from God and others. In those times I need a moment...to collect myself and remember the love of our God that always calls me back. A refugee does not intend to stay in the camp forever. It is a safe stop along the way. Mary does the same. She is always pointing to her son as the final destination. I think of the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus tells us to love God with all our heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. As a patient and loving mother, Mary reminds me to heed those words and that will lead me out of any sin.

Is there something that I am hiding from?  
Can this season of Advent be a time of refuge, a moment  
to catch my breath before continuing on?

Mary, Refuge of Sinners ... Pray for us!



ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

# Thursday, Day 18

## Our Lady of Lourdes

by Scott Kuhner, Queens, NY

As a Marist, Mary as Our Lady of Lourdes, is someone I look up to. She appeared to St. Bernadette at Lourdes France in 1958. Mary appeared as a young 14 year old girl. The experience changed Bernadettes life and she responded yes to Marys invitation to return to the site for a total of 18 times, each time with an apparition of Mary.

As Marists involved in educaation and evangelization we seek to enable the love of God to shine through those around us. Mary said yes and Mary encourages others to say yes. As we walk in the world today we should continue to say yes and help others to say yes, our students, our coworkers, our family and friends.

St. Bernadette built a church and from the church came the sanctuary at Lourdes, France. Each year over 5 million people travel on pilgrimage there to seek healing and respond yes.

What am I being invited to build?  
Can I respond yes as boldly as Mary and Bernadette?

Our Lady of Lourdes ... Pray for us!



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Friday, Day 19 Mediatrix

by Joseph LoGiudice, Montvale, NJ

The title Mediatrix of all grace and mercy speaks to Mary's elevated status as a saintly intercessor due to her very special relationship with Jesus, our Savior and her son. Of course, as Mediatrix, she is not her son or part of the Trinity, but we cannot downplay her maternal closeness to her son Jesus and her maternal openness to each of us. I believe this deep maternal connection was at the heart of Champagnat's devotion to Mary.

Just like when we were children, at times we still need a spiritual mother to mediate for us to resolve problems or even fight a battle. From her own witness of Christ's Passion, Mary definitely understands human brokenness all too well along with our human need for divine intervention - for God to let us know our pain serves purpose and that God is close to us in those dark moments though it seems the opposite.

What experiences or battles in your life can you invite  
Mary to mediate for you?

**Mediatrix ... Pray for us!**





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

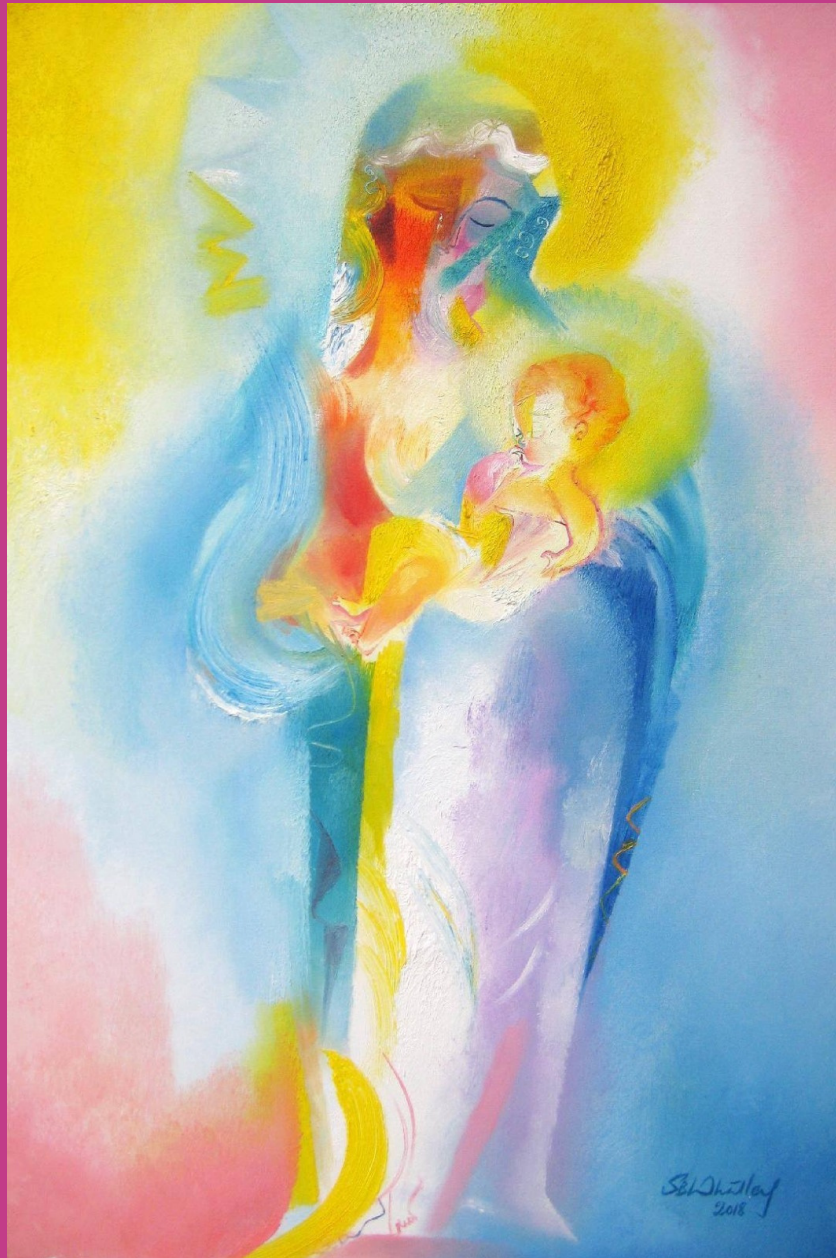
Saturday, Day 20

## Visio Divina

Photo courtesy of the  
Marist Province of Canada

On Saturdays, we let go of words and let God speak through an image, a practice called Visio Divina. This Saturday, our image was commissioned for our Marist Family in Canada.

We invite you to spend a few minutes in silence contemplating this image of Mary.





ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

Sunday, Day 2I

## The Birth of Jesus

by Bro John Kachinsky, Lawrence, MA

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

The Birth of Jesus- Luke 2: 1-21

As Marists who are called to make Jesus Christ known and loved, we become ambassadors of peace by living as Mary did, in generous acceptance of God's plan for us, and by giving Jesus the central place in our lives.

When we follow in Mary's footsteps, we continue to give birth to the Prince of Peace day by day. Mary's own peace and calmness is evident in Luke's Gospel. “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” You can almost feel Mary's calmness and her surrender to God's will.

Even if she was troubled, knowing that God was in charge of the bigger picture gave Mary peace. Today we truly need peace in our world, country, cities, families, and our hearts. Mary, Queen of Peace, Make me a channel of your peace.



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Monday, Day 22 Mother of Wisdom

by Eddie Krische, Dallas, TX

Wisdom and knowledge are words used in our daily vernacular interchangeably without any thought or reason. Knowledge is the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. Wisdom is the perspective and ability to make judgments about understood subjects or materials. Wisdom is knowing when to say the knowledge one has.

Mary, Mother of Wisdom, needed to show great knowledge; but even more importantly, great wisdom when the Angel Gabriel came down to ask her to be the Mother of God. At times, I feel overwhelmed by how many sources of “knowledge”, from schooling, news networks, social media, and friends, we can be flooded with. We need to rely on our Marist Pillars and Ideals, with Mary and Champagnat as our guides, to understand what information we are given and the wisdom to live by what we believe.

What sources of knowledge do I give priority to?  
Do I let my faith inform my actions or does the world  
around me inform my faith?

**Mother of Wisdom ... Pray for us!**



ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Tuesday, Day 23

# Mother of Grace

by Lindsay Irwin, Brownsville, TX

Grace. Though it is God's most precious gift, many of us spend much of our lives pretending we don't need it, working hard to try and get everything right on our own. Only when our best efforts have fallen undeniably short and we encounter situations completely out of our ability to manage, do we acknowledge and gratefully accept the gift of God's loving grace.

Mary's title as Mother of Divine Grace recognizes her role as Mother of Jesus, the Author of Grace. Mary is also an example of someone who lived a truly grace-filled life. Mary was confronted with challenges that she never could have imagined, and, trusting God, she was given the grace to endure times of uncertainty, worry, and grief. Mary was called to be the Mother of God, and grace was provided to help her answer that call. For each of us, in the lives to which God has called us, may this be so for us as well.

When have I experienced a difficult time  
that God's grace carried me through?

**Mother of Divine Grace ... Pray for us!**



# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Wednesday, Day 25 Solace of Migrants

by Catherine Weening, Bayonne, NJ

Family Christmases equal food. Simmering sauce, garlicky meatballs, hot zeppole. My grandparents could not bring much from Italy, but they brought their family recipes. Recipes is used loosely—our cocoa cookies have a few pinches of cinnamon, our struffoli enough flour. And so is family. As Marists of Champagnat, we believe everyone is family, no matter where they've come from. Not everyone thinks this. Every day migrants, seeking refuge from injustice, are denied at borders, separated from family, and locked in detention centers rife with neglect and void of human dignity.

In 2020, Pope Francis added Solacium Migrantium (Solace of Migrants) to the Litany of Loreto, to remind us to see Christ in all migrants. And who better to guide us than Mary, a migrant herself, denied at every inn and fleeing from persecution shortly after giving birth? As Marists, may we follow Mary's example of mercy and hope to bring solace to all migrants worldwide.

What experiences or battles in your life can you invite  
Mary to mediate for you?

Mary, Solace of Migrants ... Pray for us!





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Christmas Eve Theotokos

by Rick Martin, Eugene, OR

Soul, you must seek yourself in Me and in yourself seek Me  
(Teresa of Avila, CW vol. III, 385).

Reflecting recently upon The Parable of the Sower, I was struck by a new view of seeds. Could it be that our earthly bodies may be thought of as seeds? That the life that waits within to be released is our spiritual self, the soul, the image and likeness of God? Mary, who herself carried the seed that released the Christ into the world (Theotokos), understood this in a wholly organic manner, as perhaps all women might. As she surrendered herself to be a bearer of life, may we, as Marists, freely abandon our present selves to the way of the cross, the cruciform oath that releases one life from another. May our lives bear Christ into the world even as it bears our truest selves.

Am I living as my truest self?

How in my daily life can I bring Christ into the  
world in a more real way?

**Theotokos: God-Bearer ... Pray for us!**





# ADVENT WITH OUR GOOD MOTHER

## Christmas Day Our Good Mother

by Bro Brian Poulin, Bronx, NY

Our Good Mother was no mother at all before becoming 'Mother' to someone – namely the infant who was the new, most incredible enfleshment of God's boundless love.

She is 'Good' because she responded to the love before her with love of her own. She is also 'Our' mother because her heart doesn't know how to keep anybody out.

On Christmas, the maternal joy of Our Good Mother reminds us that the hardships and challenges we face in love and fidelity are rooted in a well-founded hope.

May we learn to think, feel, act, and judge as she does.

May Our Good Mother, our ordinary resource, help us to make Jesus known and loved in our world each day!

Mary Our Good Mother ... Pray for us!

Let us remember to ...

Pray for each other !