



# The Marian Journal

Keeping members and friends of the  
Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos informed.

*"The Old Catholic Marianists"*

February 2015

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*In a sincere desire to share the joyful happiness of our hearts, we present this February 2015 edition of "The Marian Journal".*



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(The ordination of women to ministerial or priestly office is a regular practice among some major religious groups of the present time, as it was of several religions of antiquity. It remains a controversial issue in certain religions or denominations where the ordination, the process by which a person is consecrated and set apart for the administration of various religious rites, or where the role that an ordained person fulfills, has traditionally been restricted to men. That traditional restriction might have been due to cultural prohibition or theological doctrine, or both. In some cases women have been permitted to be ordained, but not to hold higher positions, such as Bishop. In O.S.S.T., we believe that all Holy Orders (bishops, priests, and deacons) are open to both men and women, single or married.)

## Women's Ordination

by

**The Very Reverend Mother Aurore Leigh Barrett, O.S.S.T.**

As I read the newspaper accounts of women trying to be ordained as priests, I am struck by the lack of understanding these women seem to have about Catholicism as a whole. There are many Catholic Jurisdictions that would welcome women as Ordained Priests, so it makes me question why these women insist that they only be ordained through the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church is not the only Catholic Church that is valid. I, for example, was Ordained a Priest in 2003 through an Independent Catholic Jurisdiction. My ordination is valid and is in full Apostolic Succession. My Sacraments are just as real as any "Roman" Priest.

"There is much evidence to support the facts that women were ordained priests and consecratory bishops in the early church. Perhaps the most accessible example of female apostolic succession is an ancient mosaic still visible in the Church of St. Praxedis in Rome. This ninth century portrait honors four women leaders who pastured the community, beginning with Mary of Nazareth, who was often venerated by early Christians as the first apostolic woman leader. St. Praxedis and St. Pudentiana were endangered female leaders of house churches before Christianity was legalized in 313 AD. While the other two and Mary have round halos in the mosaic, the fourth woman, Theodora, has a square halo showing that she was alive when the portrait was made. Inscribed above Theodora is the word *Episcopa*, with the feminine ending, meaning a bishop who is a woman. Just as contemporary churches, cathedral offices and seminaries frequently display photographs of previous pastors, bishops and rectors, the

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mosaic at St. Praxedis reveals the succession of female pastors and bishops from Mary of Nazareth through Praxedis and Pudentiana to Theodora. Like her predecessor, St. Praxedis 700 years earlier, Theodora wears an Episcopal cross attesting to her service as bishop of the titular church of St. Praxedis." (Taken from Ute Eisen's book: *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity Liturgical Press, 2000*)

In the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome there is a 4th century fresco depicting a woman deacon in the center with her arms raised in an attitude of leadership of a public worship. On the left side of the fresco we see her being ordained a priest by a bishop. The woman is wearing an alb beneath her chasuble. The bishop is laying his right hand on her shoulder and is holding a scroll. Other figures shown in the fresco are identified as St. Peter and his daughter, St. Petronella.

St. Brigit of Kildare, who lived somewhere between 452 and 524 AD, was the abbess of a large double monastery in Kildare, Ireland. While waiting last in line in order to be admitted into monastic life, the bishop brought her forward. He, through Divine inspiration, recognized that she had already become a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). So in response to the Holy Spirit, he received her, not with the invocation for the tonsuring of a nun or monk, but with the ordination prayer of a bishop.

### **What did Jesus Christ say about Women Priests?**

Nowhere is it found that Jesus Christ stated only men could be ordained as priests. Moreover, "It is remarkable that, though the word priest is found in the New Testament one hundred and fifty-one times, it is never once applied to a Christian minister. In fact, neither John, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor James is ever called a priest." (*Ordaining Women by Benjamin Titus Roberts, pg. 26*) What we do find, as we read the New Testament, is that Jesus treated men and women alike, as equals and partners in ministry. Can we ever forget that it was Mary of Magdala who first encountered the risen Christ and was told by Him to tell the other apostles? Christ trusted this woman to announce His resurrection. He trusted this woman above the men to reveal his "good news". More information about Mary Magdalene can be found in her "Gospel".

Women were very important to the Ministry of Jesus. They supported his ministry financial and spiritually. There is a myth that the last supper was held in the upper room in the home of John Mark's mother, Mary. Mary was a wealthy woman, a widow, with a very large house. There is only one mention of Mary in the Bible and that is in Acts 12:12 which speaks of a prayer vigil held at Mary's house for Peter. Peter, well-known to Mary's household, goes directly to her house upon his escape from prison.

And it was Priscilla who taught Apollos, a man well-schooled in the Old Testament Scriptures, the new Christian faith. She understood that Apollos' limited knowledge could hurt the Christian cause. Appollos became so mighty in the Gospel that he was called an Apostle. In fact, he became so effective as a true gospel preacher that some of the Corinthians put him before Peter and Paul. All that he became he owed to the quiet instruction of Priscilla. Priscilla worked very closely with Paul and it has also been suggested that she was the author of the Book of Hebrews.

During the time of Christ, and later during the journeys of Paul, women were given positions of authority, as deacons, priests, and bishops, to preach and teach



### **2015 Feast Days of Mary**

**January 1  
Solemnity of  
Mary, Mother of  
God \***

**January 8  
Our Lady of  
Prompt Succor**

**February 2  
Presentation of  
the Lord**

**February 11  
Our Lady of  
Lourdes**

**March 25  
Annunciation**

**May 13  
Our Lady of  
Fatima**

**May 31  
Visitation**

**June 27  
Our Mother of  
Perpetual Help**

**August 15  
Assumption \***

the "good news". But by the 8th-9th centuries the Romans would again ban women from the priesthood. Yet, even with this ban the tradition of women priests lived on in art. In the Museum in the former Cistercian cloister in Bebenhausen, Germany there is a painting of three beautiful women. "The woman on the left is characterized by three objects. Her crown and her sword tell us she was a martyr. In her left hand she holds an open Bible. She is a scholar, teacher, and preacher. The woman in the center is carrying a tall gold processional cross, a mark of public ecclesiastical office. The woman on the right holds in her left hand a ciborium suspended above it is a host, to which she points with her right forefinger." (Quotation from Dorothy Irvin © 2003)

### **And What About St. Paul?**

And finally, there are the words of St. Paul, himself, who in Romans 16 states so clearly "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well." (Romans 16:1-2) As you read this chapter further you will see that St. Paul names many other women and men who were leaders of the early church.

But having written all this, it should be noted that I am not really interested in being part of the Roman Catholic Women Priest movement because, though I had been raised a Roman Catholic from the cradle, I left the Roman Catholic Church years ago. For me the honesty is that I cannot be an ordained Woman Priest, and still be a Roman Catholic. I have to speak the truth according to my own conscience – the Roman Church is not my life – my life is to serve God whenever and wherever He wants me to serve. Right now that is as an Ordained Catholic Priest (The 12th Anniversary of my Ordination will be on February 22<sup>nd</sup>) in the Independent Catholic Movement.

I do not try to dream my own dreams for God, rather I have always tried to allow God to lead me to the things He wanted me to do. God did not give me the personality of a militant, a demonstrator, or a person to force change. He made me a quiet follower – not a loud follower. As I age I spend more time in prayer, humbling myself before God, not wanting to have people see me – but Him. For I truly believe that the way you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God.

"Jesus replied 'If any one loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with Him". *John 14:23 NIV*

*(The Very Reverend Mother Aurore Leigh Barrett, O.S.S.T. is an Archpriest and First Professed member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos. She is a writer, poet, speaker, visionary, and entrepreneur who has taken the religious name of Sister Mary Faustina. Rev. Mtr. Aurore is scheduled to make her Final Perpetual Solemn Life Profession in March of this year.)*

## **O.S.S.T. and The Aisling Community enter into Agreement of Intercommunion**

*Aisling Community*

**August 22**  
**Queenship of**  
**Mary**

**September 8**  
**Birth of Mary**

**September 12**  
**The Most Holy**  
**Name of Mary**

**September 15 Our**  
**Lady of Sorrows**

**October 7**  
**Our Lady of the**  
**Rosary**

**November 21**  
**Presentation of**  
**the Blessed**  
**Virgin Mary**

**December 8**  
**Immaculate**  
**Conception \***

**December 12**  
**Our Lady of**  
**Guadalupe**

**\* Holy day of**  
**Obligation**

**The Month of**  
**Mary is May.**

**The Month of the**  
**Rosary is**  
**October.**

**The Feast of the**  
**Immaculate Heart**  
**is the Saturday**  
**following the**  
**Second Sunday**  
**after Pentecost.**



It is with heartfelt joy that we announce an Agreement of Intercommunion was entered into on January 19, 2015 between the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos and the Aisling Community of Saint Ita and Saint Fillan. This is the culmination of a long standing relationship between our two communities. Undoubtedly there are differences of doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, and liturgical practice among our two jurisdictions. But yet, we share many more commonalities in the essentials of faith that make us part of the same One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In brief, The Aisling Community of Saint Ita and Saint Fillan (or Aisling Community for short) is an association (or monastery without walls) for men, women and couples who endeavor to follow the Celtic Christian way of 'seeing' and who desire to pursue their vocations individually, rather than in a more traditional religious community. Members live at home and are free to worship in the denominations of their choice, should they wish to do so. While headquartered in Auckland, New Zealand, the community has, over time, become international in scope, catering particularly for solitaries and also for small 'daughter' communities in both the UK and USA as well as in New Zealand. We share in their vision of what the Church (or should we say Christianity) should be about. And we applaud them for having the courage to step out in faith to make these things happen. May God pour out His blessings upon us all.

## **O.S.S.T. enters into Agreement of Intercommunion with The Benedictine Community of Saint Anthony**



**The First Saturday of each Month is also dedicated to Marian Devotions.**



### **Holy Rule**

**The goal of every member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is to bring "all things together in Christ" and with Christ to build this world, brick by brick so to speak, until Christ takes what we together have built and raises it up to the Almighty Father as the best fruits of our labor. The O.S.S.T. member lives a simple Holy Rule of Life which includes prayer, good works, and special**

The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is extremely proud to have an Agreement of Intercommunion with The Benedictine Community of Saint Anthony entered into on February 1, 2015, the Feast of St. Brigid of Kildare. The Benedictine Order of Saint Anthony (BCSA) is a Benedictine religious community of Autocephalous Catholics much like the National Catholic and Old Catholic Churches as found in Europe. Their Monastery and Motherhouse were founded in 1998 and moved from Stevensville, Montana to Nashua, Montana in 2006. Their purpose is prayer and work (*ora et labora*) according to the Rule of St. Benedict and they follow the spirit of the sayings of the desert fathers and mothers. The goal of BCSA is to Love God and their neighbors; to reach out as God provides the means to do so in spiritual works and works of mercy. The Motherhouse is in Nashua, Montana; and they have a very small hermitage of 12 acres North of Glasgow under long term development where they offer time alone with God under very primitive conditions at this time.

GOALS and ACTIVITIES of The Benedictine Community of Saint Anthony:

- To Love God.
- To Love others.
- To Pray for others, as they request prayers.
- To Offer Holy Mass for Families and Individuals on request in their Chapel of St. Benedict in Nashua, Montana.
- To Offer interested souls Biblical Studies and the ecclesial degrees of L.TH., S.T.L., and S.T.D. to those interested in deeper Biblical studies. They also offer the TH.D.
- To Offer Spiritual Direction through Biblical Wisdom. This means counsel from the Holy Scriptures.

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*(The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is pleased to be in communion with these two wonderful religious communities. We as autonomous religious communities; declaring our unqualified belief in the entire Word of God written, humbly invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have covenanted together to form such a Communion. In so doing, we collectively recognize our distinctively Catholic principles to include emphasis on tradition, regard for reason, analogical imagination, and universality, including a both/and rather than an either/or approach to Christian faith and practice. A special thanks to the Reverend +James Stewart, ACSIF and the Reverend Mother Alys Thorpe, ACSIF of The Aisling Community of Saint Ita and Saint Fillan as well as to +Archabbot Anthony RD Curley, OSB/BCSA and +Abbot Martin Andrew, OSB/BCSA of The Benedictine Community of Saint Anthony for making these Agreements of Intercommunion possible. We invite other organizations, religious communities, and/or jurisdictions wishing to seek communion with us to contact us via the contact page on our web site at: <http://www.osst-abbey.org> or by simply sending an email to our Presiding Archbishop / Abbot at: [DomRobert@osst-abbey.org](mailto:DomRobert@osst-abbey.org))*

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## ***Ave Maria Theological Seminary***

***DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF AN OLD CATHOLIC SEMINARY***

***CATHOLIC ~ CLASSICAL ~ COMPLETE***

# Lectio Divina

by

Brother Francis+, O.S.S.T.

*dedication to the example of Mary, the Mother of God. Just as Mary was asked by Almighty God to bring his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into this world, so the O.S.S.T. member is dedicated to bring Jesus into this world of ours. All Christians are called to be the "body of Christ" today in the here and now of human existence. Members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos are called and dedicate themselves in a special way as an act of solemn profession.*

*The O.S.S.T. Holy Rule of Life has four basic rules to which each member makes at each step of his/her profession (as a Postulant, First Professed, and Solemn Profession):*

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." (Saint Jerome, 340-420)

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (*Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum* 1962 - 1965) urged all Catholics to return to Scripture as a way of "supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." (Philippians 3:8)

"It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living Word which questions, directs and shapes our lives." (Pope John Paul II *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39)

This brief article is a summary of the ancient practice of lectio divina. Lectio divina is Latin for Divine Reading. This style of prayer dates back to the early monastic tradition. Trappist monk Father Thomas Merton (1915 -1968) wrote, "It is understood that the personal prayer of the monk is embedded in a life of psalmody, liturgical celebration and the meditative reading of Scripture (lectio divina)."

How great it is to come into the depths of God's Word. We are able to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:9) and his words are "more desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold, sweeter also than honey or drippings from the comb." (Psalm 19:11) Love, peace, and happiness are ours when we learn to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)

"Lectio Divina is Latin for *divine reading*, spiritual reading, or "holy reading," and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to engender communion with the Triune God and to increase in the knowledge of God's Word. It is a way of praying with Scripture that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, pray from God's Word." (Cf. O.S.S.T. Rule Article V) Lectio divina is recommended by our Rule. We are urged to listen with our hearts because it was the Word of God that we are hearing.

Trappist monk Father Thomas Keating (1923), founder of the centering prayer movement explained what lectio divina is *not*. "It is *not* traditional Bible study, not reading the Scriptures for understanding and edification, and not praying the Scriptures (though praying the Scriptures can be a form of lectio divina when a word or phrase is taken from the Scriptures to focus on for the purpose of going into "God's presence."") Father Keating exclaims that lectio divina is a beginning into the more intense practices of centering prayer and contemplative prayer.

Guigo II the Carthusian (1114 - c. 1193), the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, said about Lectio Divina, "Reading is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrations of one's powers on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth.

**1. To lead a God-centered life dedicated to the mission of Jesus Christ, as Mary did.**

**2. To organize his/her life around prayer and good works for the glory of God, as Jesus and Mary did. O.S.S.T. members offer to God their daily prayers of reading from the Holy Scriptures, spiritual reading, lives of the saints, and meditation.**

**The official prayer book of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is the Magnificat publication (available at [www.magnificat.net](http://www.magnificat.net)) which gives daily morning, evening, and night prayers based on the Psalms and Sacred Scripture, a meditation on Mary, a brief account of the life of a saint, and the Liturgy of the**

Prayer is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness." The monk continues, "Reading, as it were, put the food into the mouth; meditation chews it and breaks it up; prayer extracts its flavor; contemplation is the sweetness itself which gladdens and refreshes." Saint John Chrysostom (347-407) is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, said about Scripture, "To get the full flavor of an herb, it must be pressed between the fingers, so it is the same with the Scriptures; the more familiar they become, the more they reveal their hidden treasures and yield their indescribable riches."

A 7th-century Assyrian bishop and theologian best remembered for his written work, Isaac of Nineveh, wrote: "Do not approach then words of Scripture, full of mystery, without prayer... say to God: "Lord, make me perceive the strength that is to be found here." (Voir J. Wensink, *Mystic Treatise by Isaac of Nineveh* (Amsterdam, 1923), par. 329, ch. XLV, p. 220) What we pursue in a text of Scripture is not an abstract, irrelevant meaning; it is a force able of transforming us, the reader.

Benedictine Friar Luke Dysinger, explains that this "VERY ANCIENT art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as *lectio divina* – a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God." "The method of *Lectio Divina* includes moments of reading (*lectio*), reflecting on (*meditatio*), responding to (*oratio*) and resting in (*contemplatio*) the Word of God with the aim of nourishing and deepening one's relationship with the Divine."

*An Invitation to Centering Prayer with and Introduction to Lectio Divina*, by Basil Pennington and Luke Dysinger (Liguori/Triumph, 2001) has included a brief synopsis of *Lectio Divina*. The author will present the teachings exactly as written.

LECTIO DIVINA is an ancient spiritual art that is being rediscovered in our day. It is a way of allowing the Scriptures to become again what God intended that they should be - a means of uniting us to Himself. In *lectio divina* we discover our own underlying spiritual rhythm. We experience God in a gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual activity and receptivity, in the movement from practice into contemplation and back again into spiritual practice.

LECTIO DIVINA teaches us about the God who truly loves us. In *lectio divina* we dare to believe that our loving Father continues to extend His embrace to us today. And His embrace is real. In His word we experience ourselves as personally loved by God; as the recipients of a word which He gives uniquely to each of us whenever we turn to Him in the Scriptures.

FINALLY, *lectio divina* teaches us about ourselves. In *lectio divina* we discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God. God teaches us in *lectio divina* what it means to be members of His royal priesthood - a people called to consecrate all of our memories, our hopes and our dreams to Christ.

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515- 1582), also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, invites us to contemplate the humanity of the Son with the eyes of the Father. "For, in giving us, as He did, His Son, which is His Word and He has no other - He spoke to us all together, once and for all, in this single Word, and He has no occasion to speak further." "All troubles of the Church, all the evils in the world, flow from this

*Eucharist which enables the O.S.S.T. member to join with all others in the Catholic Faith tradition through spiritual Communion with our priests or actual reception of Holy Communion if the Celebration of the Eucharist is available to them.*

*3. To love God's creation, protect it, nurture it and bring it with Jesus to the fulfillment that the Creator intended when he sent his Son, Jesus, to redeem it.*

*4. To live a life of loving God first, and neighbor as self. The great commandments that Jesus gave us and Mary showed us how to live through her life. Monks, Tertiaries, and Associates share a common bond in living their lives of prayer and good works.*

source: that men [women] do not by clear and sound knowledge and serious consideration penetrates into the truths of Sacred Scripture." (Attributed to Saint Theresa of Avila)

In closing, Lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures. Let the spirit, the Word of God, live abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts.

*(Brother Francis+, O.S.S.T. is a priest, chaplain, and Final Perpetual Solemn Professed member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos. He is a retired educator with numerous advanced degrees and impeccable credentials in ministry.)*

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## **Profession of Vows, New Postulants, Incardination...commitment to the Lord in 2014**

**Darrell Gene Hilliard, O.S.S.T.S.** celebrated his Rite of Blessing and Reception of an Associate member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos on 12 September 2014. Darrell resides in Pooler, Georgia.

**Reverend Jeffrey Morris Roy** celebrated his Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant and Incardination as a priest on 21 November 2014. Father Jeffrey resides in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

**Reverend Thomas Ambler Stapleford** celebrated his Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant and Incardination as a priest on 21 November 2014. Father Tom resides in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

**Subdeacon Wayne Henri (Hank) Silk, O.S.S.T.** was appointed a licensed (non-ordained minor order) Subdeacon in the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos on 11 October 2014. Subdeacon Hank is a student at Ave Maria Theological Seminary studying for Holy Orders and resides in Enola, Pennsylvania.

*Congratulations!*

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## **Pray, But Swing the Hammer!**

by

**The Very Reverend David Adams St. John, O.S.S.T.**

Several years ago, an old Seattle acquaintance of ours died at the age of 83. He was truly a man of God - and in this short article I will tell you why. His name was Reverend Olin Nordsletten, and from the time I was knee-high to a Dungeness crab until his retirement in 1987, he was Pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church near my neighborhood in north Seattle. He also was the minister who officiated at our wedding over 37 years ago.

Not only was "Ole" Nordsletten a man of prayer, he was also a man of action. And

***The living of the details of this Holy Rule of Life is as unique as each one of us! God's will be done!***



### **Our Charism**

***The Order is distinguished by certain charisms, or gifts given by God for the benefit of the Christian community.***

***These charisms guide all Marianist ministries and programs:***

**People of faith.**  
***As spiritual individuals, Marianists carry out God's will in their service to others.***

**Followers of Mary.**  
***Marianists view Mary as the model of***

that is why, many years ago, his church adopted the motto: "Pray, but swing the hammer!"

When he learned of someone in need, he often gave them money from his own pocket, then appealed to his congregation to help in any way they could. When he learned of an increasing number of high-school dropouts in the early 1970's, he established the first special program for them, called "Second Mile School", which was later taken over by the local school districts. And he worked tirelessly with county officials to establish the Paramount House – low-income apartments for the elderly and disabled.

Pray, but swing the hammer! That's not a bad motto for us all to live by. We are commanded, first, to love God. That means that we follow Him and obey Him, and to do this we must always be in communication with Him. We do this through worship and prayer. The second commandment means that as his disciples, we are to put that love into practice by loving our neighbors. That's the work of love. That's swinging the hammer. It means that our love of God will show by our actions in the world.

Pastor Olin Nordsletten's legacy to his parishioners and friends could be no greater than this. When people describe him, they use terms like "unconventional" and "unorthodox", but people of action are often described like that. There is no doubt that all who knew him knew that he was, indeed, a disciple of Christ. He prayed, and he swung the hammer. He had his own style, but he got things done.

Our legacy, too, should be no less than this.

*(The Very Reverend David Adams St. John, O.SS.T. is an Archpriest and First Professed member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos. He is a prolific writer and the author of many books who has taken the religious name of Brother John Paul. Father David is scheduled to make his Final Perpetual Solemn Life Profession in March of this year.)*

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## **An Explanation of the Commonly Misunderstood Beliefs About Mary**

**submitted by**

**The Most Reverend Robert Francis Jangro, O.SS.T.**

It is a tragic fact that beliefs about Mary, the mother of Jesus, have become a source of division among Christians. Many Christians honestly do not understand what Catholics believe about Mary and why. Sometimes Catholics have been accused of worshiping Mary. For their part, many Catholics do not understand why other Christians are sensitive to the attention given to Mary by Catholics. Indeed, many Catholics do not understand what their own Church teaches about Mary, and are thus ill-equipped to explain these beliefs to others. This article is intended to help bridge this chasm of misunderstanding.

Mary and the "Hierarchy of Truths"

Catholics believe that there is a "hierarchy" or order of Christian truths. In other words, not all Christian truths are equally central to the basic gospel message.

***discipleship. Just as Mary gave birth to Jesus, Marianists seek to bring the presence of Jesus to life within themselves and others.***

***People of community. Marianists believe that living, praying and supporting one another in community enriches their faith and strengthens their ability to meet world challenges.***

***Discipleship of equals. Brothers, sisters, and priests share equal status within the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos.***

***Leaders in mission. The Marianist mission is to bring Christ to the world and to work for the coming of His kingdom.***

Official Catholic teaching has never considered beliefs about Mary as being equal in importance to truths about God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Truths about Mary are significant as they are related to the basic gospel message. Not all New Testament writings explicitly mention Mary. For example, in all the New Testament letters attributed to Paul, Mary is mentioned only once, and not even by name (Gal 4:4). This certainly does not prove that Paul never spoke about Mary, but it does indicate that the basic gospel could be proclaimed without focusing on Mary.

However, many other New Testament writings do speak about Mary, and Catholic Christians therefore believe that it is important to have a correct understanding of her role in God's plan of salvation. The Catholic Church has never ceased to teach about Mary, and in the past 150 years it has made some major pronouncements about her life and her role in God's saving plan. Catholics believe that the Church's understanding about Mary, as about all Christian truth, has deepened and become more precise over time through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Beliefs about her have been clarified to answer new questions and to settle new controversies. When the Catholic Church appears to teach "new things" about Mary, it is usually an official statement or clarification of things that have long been taught and believed by Christians. These statements usually present truths that originated in the Church during the early centuries of Christianity.

The principle of the "hierarchy" of truths points out two extremes that must be avoided in Christian teaching about Mary. On the one hand, Marian doctrines must not be presented as equal in importance to the fundamental Christian truths about the nature of God and redemption. Mary must never be exalted to the status of a "goddess" deserving the worship and adoration due only to God. On the other hand, Mary's role in God's plan of salvation must not be ignored nor neglected.

Although the doctrine of Mary is not essential for salvation, she has an important place in God's saving plan, and hence she has a definite role in the faith and life of every Christian.

Catholic theologians and preachers of the divine word are earnestly exhorted that in treating of the unique dignity of the Mother of God, they carefully and equally avoid the falsity of exaggeration on the one hand, and the excess of narrow-mindedness on the other.... Pursuing the study of the sacred scripture, the holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgies of the church, and under the guidance of the church's teaching authority, let them rightly explain the offices [roles] and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which are always related to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity, and piety.

Fr. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., summarizes the approach for Catholic Christians to Mary in relationship to the hierarchy of truths:

"Most Catholic theologians would grant that the role of Mary represents a secondary truth in a hierarchy of New Testament truths. At the top of that ladder of truths comes the Fatherhood of God, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the power and gifts of the Spirit, and forgiveness of sins, and the promises of eternal life. Mary's role does not have the same "weight" in the New Testament witness as these truths and events.

Yet her role should not be considered Roman Catholic denominational baggage, a Catholic belief but not a Christian belief. The easy distinction between a Catholic truth and a Christian truth is not acceptable. The role of Mary, it is our contention,

***Old Catholic Marianists strive to be like Mary – and professed religious Marianists take a vow of stability, which reflects their special devotion to her strength, grace, and spirituality.***



***As a Catholic family, O.S.S.T. is committed to the gospel message that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Our mission is to spread the Good News of Salvation.***



***We are an Old Catholic Institute of Consecrated Life like no other. A religious community that since 2009, has embodied the selflessness of***

is specifically a Christian truth. Obviously, one does not want to say that Protestants who do not accept Mary's role are not Christian, rather, the assertion is that her role belongs to the total Christian mystery, and therefore to the definition of a Christian....

Over the centuries the experience of millions of Christians witnesses to the role of Mary. That experience is manifested, in part, to the liturgies of the Eastern and Western church. Will not contemporary Christian life be impoverished if that whole experience is dismissed without the most careful discernment?"

While Christians must not exaggerate the importance of the role of Mary in God's plan, neither can they afford to dismiss it.

*(The Most Rev. Dr. Robert F. Jangro, O.S.S.T. is founder and Presiding Archbishop-Abbot of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos. He recently retired after forty-two years of federal service and is looking forward to a more active ministerial role in his local community. Dom Robert has taken the religious name of Brother Damien.)*

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## **Our Featured Saint**

### **“Saint Brigid of Kildare”**

**submitted by**  
**+Archabbot Anthony RD Curley, OSB/BCSA**

Saint Brigid

Abbess and Patroness of Ireland  
(436-523)

Next to the glorious Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid, whom we may regard as his spiritual daughter in Christ, has ever been held in singular veneration in Ireland. She was born about the year 453, at Fochard in Ulster. During her infancy, her pious father saw in a vision men clothed in white garments pouring a sacred unguent on her head, thus prefiguring her future sanctity. While still very young, Brigid consecrated her life to God, bestowed everything at her disposal on the poor, and was the edification of all who knew her.

Saint Brigid was very beautiful, and fearing that efforts might be made to induce her to break the vow by which she had bound herself to God, she prayed that she might become ugly and deformed. Her prayer was heard, for her eye became swollen, and her whole countenance so changed that she was allowed to follow her vocation in peace, and marriage with her was no more thought of. When about twenty years old, our Saint made known to the nephew and disciple of Saint Patrick, Saint Mel, her intention to live only for Jesus Christ, and he consented to receive her sacred vows. On the appointed day, the solemn ceremony of her profession was performed according to the manner introduced by Saint Patrick, the bishop offering up many prayers, and investing Brigid with a snow-white habit, and a cloak of the same color. While she bowed her head on this occasion to receive the veil, a miracle of a singularly striking and impressive nature occurred: The section of the wooden platform adjoining the altar on which she knelt,

***man as it has helped overcome adversity in the world. We are men and women of faith. Guided not only by our belief in God and the Catholic Church, but by our belief in each other, and in ourselves. We are the Old Catholic Marianists. Believing that a man or woman is defined by his/her actions as a follower of God, and as a leader in his/her community. Believing that a man or a woman is more than simply a man or a woman, when he/she bears the title of Old Catholic Marianist.***



***Dedicated to making a difference and building a future.***

***Where there is religious, there is JOY!***



recovered its original vitality and put on all its former verdure, retaining it for a long time afterwards. At the same moment Brigid's eye was healed, and she became beautiful once again.

Encouraged by her example, several other young persons made vows, and in compliance with the wish of the parents of her new associates, the Saint agreed to found a religious residence for all of them in the vicinity. When a site was chosen by the bishop, a convent, the first in Ireland, was erected upon it; and in obedience to the prelate Brigid assumed the superiority. Her reputation for sanctity became greater every day; and in proportion as it was diffused throughout the country, the candidates for admission into the new monastery increased in number. The bishops of Ireland, soon perceiving the important advantages which their own dioceses would derive from such foundations, persuaded the young and saintly abbess to visit different parts of the kingdom, and, when an opportunity was offered, they introduced branches of her institute everywhere.

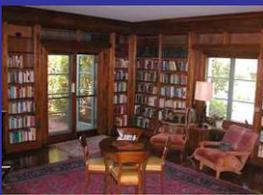
While she was in the province of Connaught, a deputation arrived from Leinster to solicit the Saint to take up her residence in that territory; the prospect of the many spiritual advantages which would result induced her to accede to their wishes. Taking with her a number of her spiritual daughters, she journeyed to Leinster, where they were received with many demonstrations of respect and joy. At the site on which Kildare now stands, Saint Brigid and her companions took up residence. Brigid contrived out of their small means to relieve the poor of the vicinity very considerably; and when the wants of these indigent persons surpassed her slender finances, she did not hesitate to sacrifice for them the movables of the convent. On one occasion, imitating the burning charity of Saint Ambrose and other great servants of God, she sold some of the sacred vestments in order to procure the means of relieving their necessities. The renown of Brigid's unbounded charity drew multitudes of the poor to Kildare; the fame of her piety attracted to the region many persons anxious to solicit her prayers or to profit by her holy example.

In time the number of her followers and admirers increased so greatly that it became necessary to provide accommodation for them in the neighborhood of the new monastery, and thus were laid the foundations of the town of Kildare. There an episcopal see was erected, which eventually became the ecclesiastical metropolis of the province to which it belonged.

Saint Brigid died after seventy years devoted to the practice of the most sublime virtues, during which her holy institute had become widely diffused throughout the Green Isle, and had greatly advanced the cause of religion in the various districts where it was established. Like a river of peace, its progress was steady and silent; it fertilized all the regions fortunate enough to receive its waters, and caused them to put forth spiritual flowers and fruits with all the sweet perfume of evangelical fragrance.

The day on which the holy nun was to terminate her course, February 1, 523, having arrived, she received from the hands of a saintly priest the blessed Body and Blood of her Lord in the divine Eucharist, and passed to the eternal vision of the God she had always adored. Her body was interred in the church adjoining her convent, but later was exhumed and deposited in a splendid shrine near the high altar, afterwards to be moved again and placed in the same grave with the relics of the glorious Saint Patrick. Their holy remains, together with those of Saint Columba, were translated afterwards to the cathedral church of Kildare.

*We are a community that gathers in faith, serves in love, and proclaims hope, through Jesus Christ.*



Little Pictorial Lives of the Saints, a compilation based on Butler's Lives of the Saints and other sources by John Gilmary Shea (Benziger Brothers: New York, 1894).

*(+Archabbot Anthony RD Curley, OSB/BCSA is founder and Abbot Emeritus of The Benedictine Community of Saint Anthony. Abba Anthony suggested the Feast Day of Saint Brigid as the day of signature for our Agreement of Intercommunion. Thank you Abba Anthony for partnering with us in ministry!)*

## **Fourth Annual O.S.S.T. Synod / Retreat held October 24-26 2014 in Santa Barbara, CA**



**Immaculate Heart Center for Spiritual Renewal**

Renew, Reconnect, Refresh, Replenish was the overarching theme as the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos – “The Old Catholic Marianists” assembled in Chapter 24–26 October 2014. We once again gathered for our 2014 O.S.S.T. Synod / Retreat at the Immaculate Heart Center for Spiritual Renewal located in the foothills of Montecito, (Santa Barbara) CA, as a time for spiritual renewal, connected community, prayerful worship, and engaging dialogue. As Christians we are indeed called to be in relationship both with God and with each other. Without the relational element, any individual, much less any religious community and /or order, is bound to be weakened. Subsequently, relationships and community must be nurtured in religious life.

The purpose of the annual Synod / Retreat was to provide our membership the opportunity to gather from across the vast distances of the jurisdiction for worship, theological reflection, fellowship, networking, and spiritual renewal. All members (professed monks and tertiaries, postulants and associates, as well as candidates) were all encouraged to attend.

Religious traditions always turn to something beyond simple survival, something meaningfully deeper, to fulfill the human need for purpose and meaning; human beings need a sense of community, belonging, and connection.

The word religion itself is most likely derived from the Latin root religare, to “re-tie” or “re-connect”. Do we need to “re-tie” or “re-connect” with our sisters, with our brothers, with our Order? The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is about



**We are on a Journey**

***The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos finds itself placed by God in a unique position. We believe that the Lord has established us to***

who we are as a community and what we are doing individually and collectively to build God's kingdom.

Parker Palmer, a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), was puzzled over the longevity of monastic communities, especially given the difficulties of community life. He concluded that it is because the monks "created a form of community that brings them together not for the purpose of togetherness but to support each other in the rigors of the inward journey." (Parker Palmer, "The Monastic Way to Church Renewal," Desert Call, Winter 1987: pp.8-9.)



## **RENEW, RECONNECT, REFRESH, REPLENISH**

***Wherever Two Or Three Are Gathered In My Name***

**2014 Annual Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos Synod / Retreat**

**October 24-26, 2014**

**Immaculate Heart Center for Spiritual Renewal, Santa Barbara, CA**

*To view pictures of 2014 O.S.S.T. Synod / Retreat visit our web site at:*

[http://www.osst-abbey.org/2014\\_osst\\_synod\\_\\_retreat](http://www.osst-abbey.org/2014_osst_synod__retreat)

## **Prayer Concerns**

There is no greater work than that of prayer for one leading the Religious Life. Members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos promise to live a life of

*be a bridge  
between those  
called to the  
religious life, and  
those called to  
maintain a family  
and/or  
professional life.  
As an  
Independent/Auto  
cephalous  
Catholic  
ecumenical  
religious order,  
we embrace all  
Christian  
believers and the  
un-churched,  
aiding them in  
their journey to  
God.*

*We find ourselves  
"on a journey". It  
is a pilgrimage  
that some  
describe as a  
"convergence of  
streams"  
- integrating the  
fundamental  
principles of  
contemplative  
spirituality into  
our modern lives -  
a "river whose  
streams make  
glad the city of  
God, the Holy  
Place where the  
Most High  
dwells." Psalm  
46:4*

*We are on a  
journey to seek*

prayer. Prayer unites each member with the Order and links the Community with all those in need. Indeed, prayer is the greatest gift one can give to another.

Prayer is an offering of praise, petition, and thanksgiving. Prayer opens the doors of Heaven and places us in the throne room of God. Prayer offers the soul the opportunity to once again meet and touch its Lover and Creator in a mystical way. Prayer is a selfless act, as we seek in it the will of God through Christ Jesus. In it we can find contentment, peace, tears, joy, and union with God. Through prayer we seek wholeness, healing and a desire only to love God.

It has been the privilege of monastic communities for centuries to pray for and on behalf of God's kingdom on earth, the Church, and all others in need. Members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos continue this tradition by way of the Divine Office and treasure this responsibility. Our primary work is the Work of God. To pray for a world that cannot or will not pray for itself.

Please join us in prayer as we remember:

**Subdeacon Wayne Henri (Hank) Silk, O.SS.T.** for continued recovery from a stroke.

**Deacon Russell Dean Lee, O.SS.T.** for continued recovery from surgery due to a broken ankle.

*(We invite anyone seeking prayer to contact us via the contact page on our web site at: <http://www.osst-abbey.org> or by simply sending an email to our Presiding Archbishop / Abbot at: [DomRobert@osst-abbey.org](mailto:DomRobert@osst-abbey.org) We will be honored to join you in prayer.)*

## **Message from the Presiding Archbishop-Abbot**



***Mary, the Theotokos, pray for us and lead us to do the Father's will for our lives.***

*spiritual growth  
and our place in  
the life of the  
Church. We are in  
the midst of  
something  
powerful and  
overwhelming. If  
this declaration is  
exciting to you,  
you are probably  
on the same  
journey as those  
of us in the Order  
of the Most Holy  
Mary Theotokos.  
We encourage  
you to join us on  
our journey.*



**Order of the Most  
Holy Mary  
Theotokos**

**The Mother  
House,  
Our Lady of  
Peace Archabbey,  
Atlanta, GA**

**The Abbey of Our  
Lady of the Bright  
Mount,  
Las Vegas, NV**

**Saint Charles  
Lwanga Abbey,  
Corona, CA**

**Our Lady of  
Divine Providence  
Abbey,  
Roanoke, VA**

Greetings My Dear Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Associates, and Friends of O.S.S.T.,  
May the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary be upon you. Amen.

To follow Jesus is to encounter change. Call it repentance, the ancient word *metanoia*. It's all about change, which is at the center of the challenging and hope-filled new ministries (as well as our long-standing ones) in which the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is engaged. But, truth be told, change causes the bile to increase, the acid reflux to be omnipresent. There are times when I think I should invest in antacid manufacturers. Change causes fear. And, in his typical fashion, at first glance Jesus is less than helpful.

He had and still has this vision to share with us, inviting us to follow him. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus tells us that if we are not afraid to lose our lives, we might be surprised to find them. And the cross of which he spoke was not a piece of jewelry; it was a means of execution *and* a form of intimidation. It reinforced the idea that death was the most awful thing in the world and that people with any sense at all should do everything in their power to avoid it.

Rather than running from them, our Lord Jesus tells us to pick up our crosses. There are worse things than death in the world and living in fear, including fear of change, is at the top of the list. If you are going to let fear rule your life, fear will become your god and the only standard for your behavior will be how much something scares you.

I am convinced that fear of change is the biggest obstacle we face in the church today.

Fear was not the only choice the disciples had, according to Jesus. And it's not our only option either. Instead of surrendering themselves to their fear, they could surrender to God. They could deny the panic-stricken voice inside – the same one that keeps ordering us to play it safe and take no risks – and listen instead to the voice that says, "Do not fear. Follow me." That voice has never promised safety; it has *always* promised life. It has never offered freedom from pain; it has *only* offered freedom from fear.

And here are some of those challenges and changes which cause fear to well up in me and you.

Division within the church. Right? The days of the Corinthian correspondence, for example, are still present. We should not be surprised at dissension 20 centuries later--dissension, difference, disputes within the supremely human body of Christ. I have seen Christian people claw one another like cats in a sack. The email and letters I have received from good Christians would make your flesh crawl. Passion is great, folks; hate never is.

Division between religion and justice. There are still two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor. In a paradoxical country of wondrous wealth and unlimited promise, where one out of every five children grows up below the poverty line, where untold thousands of young people are incestuously abused, where our elders rummage for food in garbage cans, where crack and coke stunt minds and massacre bodies, where black and white continue to live in smoldering mistrust, God asks us again, "Where is your sister, your brother?"

**Associate of Our  
Lady of Peace  
Archabbey,  
Pooler, GA**

**Rectory  
Westland, MI**

**Twenty-nine  
Palms, CA**

**Halifax, Nova  
Scotia, Canada**

**Our Lady Mother  
of the Church  
Abbey,  
Enola, PA**

**Berkeley  
Springs, WV**

**Abbey of Our  
Lady of Grace,  
New Port Richey,  
FL**

**E-mail:  
DomRobert@osst-  
abbey.org**

**We're on the Web!  
[http://www.osst-  
abbey.org](http://www.osst-<br/>abbey.org)**



Division, driven by fear, is pressing hard on us as we continue to move into the mission God has for us in our Order and people gnaw and gnarl rather than converse and console. The Christ who died for you, dear brother, dear sister, lives in you and in the man or woman next to you. Even when change makes little sense to you and causes great fear, let it not destroy the shalom in you and among us.

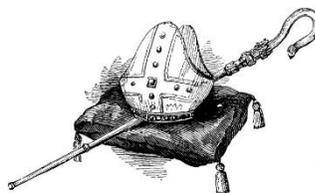
Our own crosses – and you know what they are, don't you? – do not have much to do with standing up to the Roman government. But fear is timeless, and my guess is that each of us has something of which we are deathly afraid. Maybe it's the fear of admitting an addiction of one kind or another that is eating away at your life. Maybe it's the fear of tackling a memory that still has the power to suck the breath right out of you. Maybe it's the fear of standing up for something you believe in, or telling the truth about who you are to people who are going to condemn you for it, or challenging others to walk together into the future. Maybe it's the fear of discovering you have an illness that no medicine can cure, or that your child does, or your friend: whatever it is that scares you to death, so that you start offering to do anything, anything at all, if it will just go away – that's your cross, and if you leave it lying there, it will kill you. If you turn away from it with the excuse that this should never have happened to you and you deserve better, *then* you deny God the chance to show you that there, right there in the dark night of your soul, there that cross is the door to life.

Jesus tells us to stop running from it. Start believing in God more than you believe in your fear. And follow.

Your Servant in Christ through Mary,

***Dom ++ Robert - Presiding Archbishop / Abbot, O.S.S.T.***

~ Totus Tuus ~ "Totally Yours"



***(If you have questions or comments; or you are interested in pursuing a vocation with our extended faith-filled family as a Monk, Tertiary, or Associate in the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos, we would love to hear from you. For more information, we invite you to contact us via the contact page on our web site at: <http://www.osst-abbey.org> or by simply sending an email to our Presiding Archbishop / Abbot at: [DomRobert@osst-abbey.org](mailto:DomRobert@osst-abbey.org))***