
Foreword

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Devotion to Mary has always been a hallmark of priestly spirituality. For centuries, priests have found in the Mother of Jesus a great source of personal support and a ready intercessor with her Son. In reading these reflections on Mary seen through the eyes of priests, one senses immediately a confirmation of the long-standing recognition that priests love and pray to the Blessed Mother. Monsignor Stephen Rossetti's collection of well-written and inspirational glimpses into the many-faceted relationship that Mary has with her Son and, therefore with his priests, offers enriching insight into a great priestly tradition.

Perhaps because Mary is the model of what our faith should be, we priests, who strive to live as fully as we can a life of faith, and encourage others to do the same, find devotion to her comes easily. Mary was a human being who had to struggle to hear and accept God's word and to grasp the mysterious ways in which God works. She did so with such consummate fidelity that she is forever the example of what we mean by faith—true, profound faith.

Reading the Marian vignettes in this remarkable book, we are fully aware that we cannot equal Mary in the wondrous mysteries in which she participated and in the privileges she received. But we can certainly emulate her faith. Mary said, in effect, "Although I do not always understand the unfolding of God's plan and God's providential order, nonetheless, if God calls, I accept. If God challenges, I respond."

A priest, whose life is defined by his call and most particularly his response to the call, can so comfortably identify with Mary. The faith of every priest, the faith of every believer, is challenged to be the faith of Mary. The meaning of Mary's role in God's plan of salvation is summed up in Paul's letter to the Galatians: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption" (Gal 4:4). We, as priests, are the heralds of that message and the ministers of the mysteries that unite women and men with Christ so that they might receive adoption.

It is both the greatness of the mission and the fragility of our own involvement in that sacred action that bring us so often to our knees in prayer with our hearts turned to the Mother of God, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of the Church. Reading these stories of personal faith, experience, and devotion, I was reminded of the significant role Mary has always played in my life and ministry. In the parish where I grew up, the principal image of Mary was that of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. One of the places I first celebrated Mass as a newly ordained priest in Rome included the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. To this day, I carry in my wallet a small, plastic version of that same representation of Mary. Today in my new

responsibilities at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, I am all the more strengthened with the realization that I can stop at the chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help every time I visit that extraordinary national house of Mary.

Many priests I know speak freely of their great devotion to the Mother of God. A few have even written reflections on her. But none have done so in such a wide-ranging and truly touching manner as those priests, whose thoughts and experiences concerning Mary are gathered in this heartfelt and joyful odyssey of faith put together by Monsignor Rossetti.

Behold Your Mother is one more sign of what I believe is a great renewal in the life of the Church today. Just as there is a resurgence of spirituality and a hunger for good, solid, faith-filled catechesis, so there is also a rekindling of love, priestly love, focused on Jesus' Mother and our Mother. In his introduction, Msgr. Rossetti poses the question, "Have we priests forgotten our Mother?" It does not take long into this collection of spiritual memoirs to be able to respond emphatically and happily, "No!" It is good to be reminded of just how wonderful is our long-standing and holy relationship in prayer and devotion to the Mother of God.

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