

Bülten

İZMİR BAŞEPISKOPOSUĞU



NOVEMBER | 2025 | 34

1.

SYMPOSYUM

THE PRESENCE OF MOTHER MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Symposium on the presence of the Virgin Mary in the life of the Church was held on 3rd October 2025 at Mother Mary's House, Ephesus. The coordinator of the Symposium was Marie-Francoise Desrues. The speakers of Symposium were Fr. Cermano Scaglioni OFM Conv, Fr. Andrew Hochstelder OFM Conv. and Fr. Pascal Robert OFM. Archbishop Martin welcomed the participants and presented the objectives of the Symposium. He said that Mother Mary has a unique place in our lives because she had a unique place in the salvation plans of God, she is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church. She inspires us through her life as a true disciple of Jesus and teaches us about total self-giving in life in this world as God's people. She continues to accompany us, to pray for us and to lead us to Christ, her Son and our Lord. He prayed that the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary may be present to us during this day of reflection and prayer.



KİLİSE VARLIĞINDA

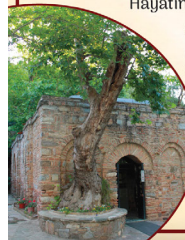
*Meryem
Ana*

“ Selam sana,
Meryem,
Lekesiz güvercin!

Selam sana,
Hayatın hazinesini!

Selam sana,
Adaletin güneşinin
annesini!

Selam sana,
Evreni taşıyanı
Taşıyan sen! ”



Aziz Ephrem Nisibeli



THE MOTHER OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Father Germano Scaglioni OFMConv

The Gospel of John, the last and most literary work of the New Testament, is particularly rich in theological insights. Events, actions, gestures, and characters exhibit a distinctly Christ-centered orientation: all serve the revelation of the Son of God. Thus, Virgin Mary's presence should also be considered in this light. The John tradition, unlike Luke's, mentions her only at the beginning of the Gospel (at Cana) and at the end (at the Cross), and then obliquely in Revelation. She is primarily a believer and mother positioned to serve the life and faith of Jesus' disciples in His ministry at the beginning and end of the Gospel. In this way, she is directly and uniquely related to the Son's person and mission.

1. The Wedding at Cana: John 2:1-11[12], the Wedding at Cana is a crucial section not only for understanding Virgin Mary, but also for grasping the essence of the message of John's Gospel, and especially its Christology. Following the foundational first section, which includes John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus and the calling of the first disciples, the Divine prologue (1:1-18) and the narrative (1:19-51)—the second section—addresses the presence of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. While Mary is directly involved in the citation of the event at Cana, the subject matter here does not primarily concern her. Indeed, the Virgin's character acquires a unique significance because she is "placed" within the revelation of Jesus' mystery and amidst his glorious divine-saving reality. This becomes even more evident when we compare the Cana incident with the incident of Mary on the cross (John 19:25-27). These two passages, placed at the beginning and culmination of Jesus' mystery and the "signs" that reveal it, provide a fundamental unity. In a sense, they constitute the culmination points of Christ's entire redemptive enterprise.

1.1. "The Beginning of the Signs." The text begins with a time and place "And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee," such a carefully framed passage cannot be an ordinary wedding feast; the purpose is



a redemptive event unfolding in the time and space of human existence. The Evangelist immediately comments “Jesus performed this first extraordinary sign. A ‘sign’ is an act or work performed by Jesus to reveal his identity as the Son of God, the presence among us of the Word incarnate. Cana is the ‘first’ of the signs, anticipating the others, revealing their meaning and purpose. It is therefore not a simple event but a fundamental event that inaugurates Jesus’ mission. With Cana, he reveals the glory, majesty, and power that he had with the Father before the creation of the world (see 1:1ff; 17:5) and that which would be given to him in his resurrection. The sign reveals the glory, and the contemplation of the glory leads to faith: “and his disciples,” the Evangelist concludes, “believed in him!” (See 11.)

1.2. “The Third Day.” The above passage begins with the phrase “the third day”: this is not merely a chronological fact, but also an expression that evokes the mystery of Jesus’ resurrection, a perfect sign that his glory was truly manifested and that the apostles believed in him. Furthermore, the third day recalls the covenant event made at Sinai with the gift of the Law, which in turn brings about the new covenant with the New Law given by Christ. Within this context of extensive and intense memory and prophecy, the Fourth Gospel describes Mary as follows: “And the mother of Jesus was there”. In this passage, Mary is repeatedly referred to as “mother of Jesus” (see 1, 3, 5, 12); similarly, in the third sentence of this section, she intervenes with Jesus to remedy a difficult situation.

1.3. Jesus’ Mother, Woman, and the Hour. Jesus’ Mother, like many of John’s characters (see Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, etc.), are introduced on a human level: “They have no wine”. But Jesus immediately elevates her to a different, transcendent level, suggesting a different kind of intervention and presence: “Woman, what do you want with me? My hour has not yet come,” he says. By addressing her as woman rather than “mother”, he distances himself from family ties to affirm his identity and mission. Her questioning response recalls the response he gave to his mother



and father in the Jerusalem temple: “Why did you seek me? Didn’t you know that I should be with my Father?” (Luke 2:49) and we recall Jesus’ words regarding his mother and brothers (Luke 8:19-21). Flesh and blood must submit to the Father’s will and the mission he has undertaken. The term “woman”—despite initial perception—does not carry a negative connotation: it will be addressed and clearly demonstrated in the parallel text of the Crucifixion (John 19:26), where the new identity and special role of Jesus’ mother in the mystery of salvation will be revealed. However, at Cana, as is evident from the words he addresses the servants immediately after the mother, this term takes on a new, positive meaning. In any case, Jesus claims his place, even with his mother. For at that moment, after all, his hour had not yet come. Jesus’ “hour” is the time of suffering, death, and glory, when both he and the Father will be glorified (cf. John 13:31; 17:1). Jesus’s entire existence is focused on this hour: that spans the entirety of the fourth Gospel and extends from the declaration, “My hour has not yet come” (2:4), to the fulfilment of the declaration, “Father, the hour has come” (17:1). After Jesus’ mysterious yet revealing response, Mary’s intervention, transforms into a call to fulfil the Son’s word, “Do whatever he tells you!” to the ministers.

1.4. *Symbol, Memory, and Prophecy.* It becomes increasingly clear that the event at Cana is no simple wedding: everything is seen in a symbolic-sacred form, evoking other acts of Jesus, such as the multiplication of loaves and the offering of His own blood as the literal drink (cf. John 6:55). Everything at Cana becomes a symbol, a memory, and a prophecy: the wedding feast is a sign of God’s ultimate communion with His people; a wedding in Christ, the bridegroom of the Church. It is no coincidence that in the following passage, John 3:29, John the Baptist calls himself “the bridegroom’s best man,” referring to Jesus as the bridegroom of the church. Naturally, there is a feast at the wedding, and wine cannot be absent from the table. Wine is particularly emphasized here (five of the six words for wine in the entire Fourth Gospel are used on this occasion), and its significance is particularly evident when compared to the water of purification used by the Jews. Water, a ritual element linked to the Old Law, is



transformed into new wine, a symbol of the Messianic era finally here and the joy that marks it. The wine in 5:1 represents not only the Messianic times with the new Law that characterizes them, but also Christ himself. The steward does not actually know “where he comes from”: but what he says and to whom Jesus reveals all things become his friends (cf. John 1:1). Therefore, the Evangelist can conclude: “Jesus did this as the beginning of miracles, manifesting his glory, and his disciples believing in him. In this profound text, Mary appears as the “mother of Jesus”: this title is repeated three times. As a mother, Mary becomes a disciple of Christ and moves from a request, they have no wine to a full commitment to faith; even to a missionary role. This mission will become even clearer in the event of Calvary. Finally, by her faith, the mother of Jesus is the forerunner of the Lord’s disciples, those who accept Jesus’s word and form the new covenant community. Along with all the believing disciples, Mary is, beyond mere symbols, the true disciple of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God.

2. *Mary at the Cross.* John 19:25-27 Mary at the Cross is a truly remarkable event at the heart of Christ’s Paschal Mystery. Its significance stems from the depth of its narrative, the context of the time, and its relationship to the event at Cana.

2.1. *Cana and the Cross.* The wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12) not only announces and, to some extent, foreshadows the event of Calvary, but also derives its full meaning from it, and 6:11 reveals its extraordinary depth. These events, which occur at the beginning and end of the Gospel, form two crucial sections that are fundamental to our understanding of Mary’s character and role, as well as John’s message. These carefully orchestrated events are clearly parallel to each other. The characters are the same: Jesus’ companions at the beginning and end of his mission are Mary, his mother, and the other apostles, represented on the cross by the “Beloved Apostle.” In both cases, the Virgin is referred to not by her personal name, but by “Jesus’ mother,” followed by “woman.” Both sections speak of the hour of Jesus, who had not yet arrived at Cana and who would come on Calvary. Both the passage at Cana and the



Crucifixion are followed by the same phrase: “After this...”, which is not only a temporal but also a consequential and significant statement, “After this,” where the community of believers gathered around Jesus and in 19:27: “After this,” everything is fulfilled. Generally speaking, we can say that if Cana reveals itself as the sign of an hour yet to come, the Cross demonstrates the fulfilment of this hour. If Cana foreshadows the “beginning,” its signs, the exaltation of the Son of Man on the Cross is the sign of perfection, revealing the glory of God and strengthening the faith of the apostles.

2.2. The Content of Jesus’ Hour.

Our focus is on the sublime events of Jesus’ hour, all of which are highly symbolic and of extraordinary theological significance. Because the evangelist presents these events as the fulfilment of Scripture, the fundamental unity and significance of these events is important as a complete account of Easter. Despite the presence of other figures, three protagonists are at the centre of Calvary, as indicated:

- Jesus, in his glorious royal glory as the crucified Son of Man, delivers sublime revelations and announces the final decrees of his will.
- Unlike at Cana, the mother does not speak but is the centre of attention as the primary depository of the Son’s will. She is referred to four times as the mother of Jesus, once as the mother of the beloved apostle, and once as “the woman.”
- Initially unnamed among those standing beneath the Cross, but later, like Mary, she is the recipient of the gift bestowed by her Lord Jesus. The mother is the most frequently emphasized figure. Above all, as the mother of Jesus, she is also seen as the mother of a woman and an apostle. The Apostle, on the other hand, is not only a follower of his Master and loved and appreciated by him, but also, precisely for this reason, the son of “Woman.”

2.3. The Beloved Apostle.

John 19:25-27, the text, which primarily emphasizes the role and presence of the mother (Woman, behold your son) and only secondarily and consequently entrusts the mother to the disciple.



Moreover, the relationships between them are not formed according to nature, but according to spirit. So, who is this disciple? He is both a person and a symbol. According to R. Bultmann, the words of Jesus, raised and hanged on the cross, are essentially the same as those mentioned in John 17:20, when he prays to the Father as a priest: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me, with their words" (cf. 8:11). According to M. Dibelius, the Beloved Disciple also includes the phrase "the example of the disciples, the man of faith, the witness of the cross, the son of Jesus' mother, and in a sense, the representative of the disciples, who are also Jesus' brothers in their position towards God" (20:17). The beloved disciple is the representative of all those who believe in and accept Jesus. They constitute God's new people, they are the Church born from the blood and water flowing from the Savior's spear-pierced side.

2.4. The Woman, the Mother of God's Children.

The woman is the mother of both the beloved apostle and the other apostles, and even of the entire community of believers for whom Jesus died. In this context, the beloved Apostle represents all the redeemed, and Mary, the woman-daughter of Zion, is the symbolic mother of the covenant community, the once scattered and now gathered children of God. Mary is the mother of all those who are regenerated through faith in Christ. Her motherhood, which began with the birth of Jesus, culminates on the Hill of Skulls.

2.5. The Mother's Warm Welcome.

The disciple of the Lord, having received a revelatory gift from the Lord and encountered motherhood, is called to an attitude of faith, a vital commitment, a decision drawn from the depths of freedom: a decision made freely, but not of one's own free will! The beloved disciple cannot reject the gift of their Master, the Lord. The mother's warm welcome is one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of true disciples of Christ. And from that moment on the apostle welcomed her into his home.'



With the gift of revelation of Mary as the mother of the faithful and her acceptance by the apostles, Jesus' work was completed. These are magnificent and majestic visions that emerge from the depths of John's Gospel.

In light of the Mary on the Cross, the mysterious sign of Cana also becomes clear. The meaning of the wedding and the hour, and the role of this woman in the lives of the Lord's apostles, are better understood.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, several distinct characteristics characterize the figure of Mary in the Gospel of John: Her name, "Mary," is never mentioned; her status as "mother of Jesus" is emphasized. Mary is present at the beginning and end of the Gospel, interacting not only with Jesus but also with others and Jesus' disciples. This last characteristic is significant: in the Gospel of John, Mary is included in the relationship between Jesus and others. This occurs both at the beginning and end of Jesus' mission. She cares for the couple getting married at Cana and their guests, informing Jesus of their needs and directing them to Jesus. On the Cross, Jesus binds his mother and his beloved disciple together like true mother and son. This mutual relationship is determined by Jesus and is based on their personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus's social





activity in John begins with his mother speaking to him. Jesus completes this by addressing his mother and his beloved disciple. Just as she is Jesus' mother, Mary is also the disciple's mother. Mary presents herself to Jesus with consideration for everyone's needs and directs everyone to listen to Jesus so that they can reflect his divine words in their actions. Mary gave birth to Jesus for earthly life, for communion with mortals, and she represents the one who brings life and joy to these followers. Therefore, she is the mother of Jesus and the mother of Jesus' disciples.





THE VIRGIN MARY IN SYRIAC TRADITIONS

Peder Adrian Hochstelder OFM Conv.

In this talk, we particularly examine how the Syriac Church fathers understood the dialogue between the Virgin Mary and the angel. We learn from them that the Virgin Mary is a model for us. Specifically, she shows us how we can win spiritual battles and submit our free will to the Lord.

Syriac is a dialect of the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus. It flourished in the city of Edessa, known as Urfa Sanli, during the 1st and 2nd centuries. After the people became Christians, they spread their faith and language to Iraq, Iran, India, and China. In the first centuries of the Syriac Church, they used poetry to interpret the Bible, pray, and spread their faith. They even composed liturgical prayers, hymns, and sermons in highly creative verse. In this article, we will examine four types of poetry: (1) catechetical (pedagogical) hymns (madroshe), (2) dialogue poems (sogyotho), (3) poetic sermons (memre), and (4) Eucharistic thanksgivings filled with poetic imagery.

Catechetical Hymns

The best-known author of catechetical hymns, St. Ephrem, lived in the 4th century. His bishop, Paul, had attended the First Council of Nicaea (325). Paul, seeing that Ephrem was a very talented and gifted young man, appointed him a teacher/theologian in the church.

Ephrem formed choirs in the church to teach these hymns, especially their short, concise, and meaningful refrains. While people may not have had much knowledge of theology, they could learn Ephrem's hymns through music in church and then sing them to their friends in their homes and outside. In this way, Ephrem not only developed the faith of his own church members but also helped spread the faith established by the Council of Nicaea. Ephrem showed great interest and respect for the Virgin Mary in his writings. Consider two lines from Ephrem's 46th teaching, On the Church, comparing the Virgin Mary and Eve:



Eve did not want to question the foolish and vile serpent.

But the Virgin (Mary) raised her voice against Gabriel.

The prudent mother [Eve] is the source of our sorrows, and the prudent sister [Mary] is the treasure of our joy.

Eve, trusted the serpent and disobeyed God. While when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that Jesus Christ would be born of her and a saviour for all people, Mary asked the angel: “I do not know a man; how can I have a child?” The angel gave an explanation: “A miracle will happen from God, through the Holy Spirit.” Finally, Mary accepted this promise (Luke 1:26-38). Throughout Christian traditions, the Church Fathers, starting with Irenaeus of Lyons, compare Mary and Eve.

Dialogue Poems

What did the Virgin Mary feel when the angel came to her? To imagine Mary’s feelings, the Syriac Church fathers wrote dialogue poems and used them as prayers in their liturgies. Dialogue poems typically involve two people discussing or speaking from the Bible. The poems take turns: one stanza in the first person, the second in the second person, and so on, typically consisting of 50 stanzas. In the Syriac Orthodox tradition, especially during the weeks leading up to Christmas and Easter, the stanzas are sung by two choirs during night prayers. A very practical aspect of these poems is their effectiveness in staying awake during midnight prayers. They also explained and taught important theological truths and, when used as congregational prayers, brought people closer to God. Let’s read a few lines from a dialogue poem that imagines the meeting between the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, which took place after the 5th century:



ANGEL: Peace be with you,
Mother of God
Blessed are you, young woman
And holy is the fruit within you

MARY: Mary says:
Who are you, Master?
And what do you mean?
What you say is far from me
And I have no idea of its meaning

ANGEL: O blessed woman,
within you is joyful
The Most High is within you,
do not fear,
In you, grace is bent down
To distribute mercy to all the world

MARY: I beseech you, my lord,
do not grieve me
You are clothed with fire;
please do not burn me
What you say to me is foreign to me
And I cannot comprehend its meaning.

ANGEL: The Father revealed it to me,
and now I declare it to you. This shared
mystery, shared between Him and His
Son, will shine through you to all the
world at the moment He sent me.

MARY: You are made of flame,
do not frighten me.

You are wrapped in fire,
do not frighten me.
O fiery one, why should I believe
you? All these things you tell me are
completely new to me.

ANGEL: If you were to respond,
it would be very surprising,
for the One who wants to remain
in your womb
would cancel the message I bring to you,
recounting the conception of the
Most High.

MARY: I am afraid to receive you,
my lord,
because my mother Eve was stripped of
her former glory when she accepted the
serpent who spoke as a friend.

ANGEL: I am sent from the Father,
To convey this message to you, and for
the love that compels him to do so, That
His Son may find a place in your womb,
And the Holy Spirit
may dwell upon you.

MARY: Therefore, O Watchman,
I will not answer,
If the Holy Spirit will come to me,
I am His servant, and He is in power,
Let it be as you say.

(Brock 2011, 12-16, 20-22)



What can we see in this very short excerpt? One, the author is trying to imagine the Virgin Mary's feelings. He describes the very natural, human feelings of doubt, anxiety, and fear. He describes a person's feelings before the majestic angel.

Ultimately, because dialogue is poetry and prayer, it teaches us to obey with discernment. It has a beautiful pedagogy. By reading and praying the Virgin Mary's lines, we identify with her. We establish a connection. We, too, learn to listen to and question the messages and thoughts that come to us. We learn what questions to ask.

Poetic Sermons

The writings that most recount the Virgin Mary's encounter with the Angel Gabriel are several poetic sermons by James of Serug. The fifth and sixth sermons. James of Seruç, who was the assistant bishop and later bishop of the Batman region on the border of Turkey and Syria in the 13th and 14th centuries, is said to have written over 700 poetic sermons. Approximately 400 remain. James of Seruç delivered such beautiful sermons and biblical commentaries in verse that he is known as the Flute of the Holy Spirit. Both Syriac Orthodox and Catholics (especially Maronites) recognize him as a saint. He particularly describes how the Virgin Mary is an example for us. The Mother of God teaches us how to fight spiritual battles. James's sermon, he emphasizes Mary's strong capacity for argument and discernment.

From James's sermon, we understand that asking questions has two benefits:

- 1. To discern whether I am obeying the righteous and righteous mind.*
- 2. The truths I am told will be more beautifully told and published for the benefit of others!*

But beyond this, we see a deeper truth in the example of the Virgin Mary: asking questions is part of faith. If we use our questions, even our doubts, to better understand God and His plan for us, they will grow and mature our faith. If our



goal is to obey God, my questioning will, like a womb, lead to the birth of Him and His will in my life.

Liturgical Prayers of Thanksgiving (Anaphoras)

Just as the Bible says that the angel will descend upon Mary, and that the Holy Spirit and the power of God will thus descend upon her, so that Jesus Christ will be conceived... similarly, during the Holy Mass, the Celebrant asks for the Holy Spirit to descend upon them, to transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. You may recall that in Luke 1:35, the Angel Gabriel makes this statement: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the one to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God.” At every Holy Mass, the Celebrant asks for the Holy Spirit to descend upon the bread and wine. This establishes a natural connection between the blessing of the Eucharist and the conception of Jesus Christ into the womb of Mary. Ephrem clearly explains this connection in a catechetical hymn.

In many thanksgivings of the Syriac Orthodox Church, there is another connection between the blessing of the Eucharist and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. During the Thanksgiving of St. James, the Celebrant prays for the Holy Spirit to cover the bread and wine with His shadow. Specifically, the words of the Angel Gabriel for Mary are used for the blessing of the bread and wine. [During the Divine Liturgy], with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the priest symbolizes Gabriel standing before Mary announcing the blessed conception. Furthermore, returning to the verb “to cover with a shadow,” it is used in the Acts of the Apostles to describe the act of the Holy Spirit descending upon new believers (Acts 10:44 and 11:15). This verb is used to describe both the descent of God’s power upon Mary, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the new believers, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Bread and Wine, transforming them into the body and blood of Christ. Mary’s free will and cooperation correspond to the free will and cooperation of the priest who calls upon the Holy Spirit, as well as the free will and cooperation of the individuals of the congregation who will receive the Holy Eucharist in faith. While the

Bread and Wine are truly transformed into the body and blood of Christ during the priest's prayer, the sanctifying effect on the lives of individual Christians awaits their consent and cooperation.



MOTHER MARY: A WOMAN OF FAITH, HOPE AND COURAGE

Fr. Pascal Robert OFM

When asked by Archbishop Martin for a presentation on how Mother Mary continue to be an inspiration for a life of faith, integrity and truthfulness today, the first thought that came to my mind was: ***Who was this remarkable woman who had been chosen and tasked with parenting the Son of God?*** As the witnessing of the painful reality of the passion and the brutal death on the Cross of Jesus, the awesome encounter with the risen Lord, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit compelled the apostles and early Church to reflect on their journey with Jesus from the beginning of his life. A new light had dawned in their lives with their faith experience in the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

The same was also true about Mother Mary. The Biblical narratives related to Mother Mary, and the writings of the Church Fathers are the reflections



of the apostles and the early church a testimony of the role Mother Mary played in the life of Jesus and the Salvific plan of God, as she loved, cared, nurtured and followed him as he grew in wisdom and understanding of God the Father's plans for him and the salvation of humanity. She stood with him and fully shared in His pain of rejection, being mocked, persecuted, and dying on the Cross.

The hearts of the apostles and the early church were purified by the blood of Jesus on the Cross, but they also deeply empathized with the pain and suffering of the mother of Jesus, who patiently followed Him to the Cross, for Him and her, all that mattered was that she was there with him as her total consent to the Salvific plan of God. As God revealed to the apostles and disciples of Jesus, 'This is my Son, my Chosen One, Listen to Him' (Lk. 9:35), before parting from the world Jesus gave Virgin Mary to the Church as their mother, inspiration, protector and intercessor when from the Cross he told the beloved disciple pointing to Mother Mary, 'Your Mother' and the disciple brought her home.

Jesus did this because he wanted his followers to imitate her as true disciple and listen to her as she leads them in living a new life and gives them the inner courage and strength to persevere in persecution for the gospel life and as they wholeheartedly carried on the mission mandate of Jesus, bringing Good News to all nations and her presence assured them of Jesus' promise that He will be with them till the end of time. Her role was so significant in the early church and in the life of every follower of Jesus that they must be asking in their prayers and life together, ***who was this remarkable woman who had been tasked with parenting the Son of God?*** Further filled with awe and spiritually strengthen by the grace filled life and exemplary discipleship of Mother Mary, they must have felt challenged as to how a simple human person can be full of grace and can excel to such a level of holiness that she would be chosen by God to be the mother of God's Son, mother of the Church and an inspiration of faith in Jesus for all generations.

The Virgin Mary has been honoured and venerated as Mother of God

since the first centuries of Christianity. One of the paintings in the catacombs of Saint Priscilla represents the Virgin with her Child in her arms and a prophet, probably Isaiah, at her side. The other two paintings correspond to the Annunciation and to the Epiphany. All of the paintings mentioned are from the second century. In the catacombs of St. Peter and St. Marcellinus, one admirable painting of the third or fourth century represents Mary between Saints Peter and Paul. There, Mary is portrayed praying with her arms extended. One magnificent demonstration of the Marian devotion is the prayer “We fly to thy patronage’ that dates back to the third to fourth century, and that illustrates the intercession of Mary. The Fathers of the Church during the fourth century praise the Mother of God in many and diverse ways.

The various feasts and devotions emerged as reflections of the love and reverence the faithful have for Mother Mary from the first centuries and throughout the history of the Church, but were also meant to highlight the biblical narrative about Jesus in relation to the role assigned to Mary by God and the role she continues to play as the first who believed in Jesus as the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the fulfilment of God’s promises, the Saviour and the Redeemer of the world. Among other devotions, the prayer of Rosary reveals Mother Mary’s role in the life of Jesus and the Salvation History. It is praying with the heart of the Virgin Mary, with the love of Mary for her Son, with her faith and her hope. Mother Mary accompany us in our faith journey in knowing, loving, and following Jesus in all aspects of our lives. She leads us to the internalizing of the life and teaching of Jesus as she contemplated the mysteries of her Son’s life and “pondered all these things in her heart.” (Luke 2:19).

Mother Mary continues to guide, inspire, console, and encourage the faithful confronted with challenges through various apparitions in different parts of the world. These places of sacred encounters have become sanctuaries and shrines which inspire pilgrimages to a life of holiness, peace and reconciliation.

Who was this remarkable woman who had been tasked with parenting the



Son of God? This is a question that most adamant followers of Jesus grow up with as they reverently participate in various devotions to Mother Mary at home and in parishes, as well as the visiting of various shrines associated with Mother Mary all over the world. Sacred Scriptures reveal Mother Mary as a remarkable woman. What can we learn today in our own context and the global reality about Christian values and faith convictions from the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church?

FAMILY ORIENTED PERSON

Mary of Nazareth was an ordinary woman. She grew up as a young Jewish girl in a small town in the Palestinian Galilee. As her parents were devout Jews, besides grooming her in human values, they did their daughter's religious formation according to the Sacred Scriptures, ethical norms, and traditions. Thus, Mary grew up listening to the readings of the Torah and the Prophets at home and in the synagogue. The Hebrew Scriptures were an integral part of her prayer and her mode of life as a woman of Nazareth. She was aware of her parents' love, care, and sacrifices, as well as the importance of respecting and being obedient to her parents. She cheerfully fulfilled her responsibilities towards family and society as expected of a girl. Her relationship with God began with the history of her people, personalized with her birth, and God chose her in time to lead humanity to a new horizon, the actualization of God's promises. She knew that their lives as individuals and as a community are guided by God through the Torah. When she was of marriageable age, her parents promised her to Joseph. The Annunciation occurred during the phase of her betrothal.

Mother Mary and St. Joseph were conscientious and responsible parents. They fulfilled their family, social, and religious responsibilities with great commitment. Mother Mary and St. Joseph accepted God's will to be human collaborators in bringing Jesus to the world. God is the author of life, and children are God's gift to their parents. Human life is not confined to human intervention; every person's life has its origin in God and is therefore sacred. In the profession of faith, we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and



Giver of Life.” God has given parents the responsibility to be the caretakers of the children entrusted to their care. We all wish to model our families after the Holy Family. Mother Mary and St. Joseph knew well that the best education for children was how parents live their beliefs and convictions in their day-to-day life. They faithfully fulfilled all their religious and temporal responsibility with utmost commitment.

Jesus spent about 30 years with Mother Mary and St. Joseph. He received his human and spiritual formation within the Holy family, always focused on the mission of His Father and obedient to his parents as collaborators of God. Thus, during these years of formation, he grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and people (Luke 2:52). Jesus, the Word became flesh, revealed to us God as our Father who is compassionate towards all His creatures. God as Father and Creator of all, Jesus unites the whole of humanity into a family of God, people who live a life that reflects the sacredness of their life and relationships. Jesus was born into a family, and he respected, admired, and valued relationships. He knew the importance of religious, cultural, and social traditions that bind and strengthen families, as well as fostering integrated personalities and responsible people. The Holy Family faithfully participated in all religious obligations; His parents travelled a long distance to register themselves in the census, and on a question, Jesus said people must fulfil their duties towards the state. He participated in social activities related to people of all circles of life, and used these encounters to transform their lives with love and mercy. He attended the marriage ceremonies in the family, consoled friends in the moments of sadness, enjoyed hospitality, and used all these gatherings as opportunities to deepen their faith.

Thus, Mother Mary and St. Joseph are examples of responsible parenthood. To be a parent is a grace of God and a very important responsibility. Parents slog hard to earn enough money to provide shelter, clothing, food, and education to their children. But what is important is to provide their children with spiritual and ethical formation, which would help them to live a meaningful



and responsible life. Parents need to give their children time and be with them rather than leaving them at the mercy of the television, mobiles, and computers. Nothing can be a substitute for the responsibilities and presence of parents. Parents must thank God for the gift of children and present them to God to protect, strengthen, and guide them to a happy and grace-filled life. Parents must be aware that a family that prays together, stays together.

A WOMAN OF GREAT FAITH

As a perfect follower of Christ, Mother Mary consented to God's plan. In the moment of decision, her faith in God's plan for her was stronger than her human fears, uncertainties, and reservations; she surrendered to God's will, "May your word to me be fulfilled." Her acceptance of Jesus in the core of her being was also the beginning of her faith journey following Jesus from Incarnation, to bringing healing and wholeness with God's love and mercy to the lives of those lost and overburden, closely following Jesus in his passion and death on the Cross, his glorious Resurrection and Accession to God His Father. The goal of her life was to grow every moment in awareness of God's salvific plan for humanity through Jesus, by growing in intimacy with the saviour of the world, and in following him as a believer.

Mother Mary, representing all men and women of faith, entrusted herself to God completely, manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger. Her "Yes" is also a profession of faith of all believers to be ever open to the action of the Holy Spirit, who empowers with divine life and spiritual gifts while collaborating wholeheartedly with the grace of God. Mother Mary acknowledged with gratitude the deep connectedness of God with Her people. He has been faithful to His people in all circumstances and true to His promises. Mother Mary continues to inspire and help us to be true believers in listening and accepting God's plans for us and in putting our faith into action by eagerly being at the service of the most needy of the community and society.



MARY A WOMAN OF HOPE

Jesus chose Mother Mary at the Cross as the best person among all human beings to lead and keep his followers, the Church, in her love, protection, and care. She was the first and the perfect believer who accepted the Word of God in life, took up her Cross and followed him to Calvary, and received the Crown of salvation. Jesus knew the blessedness of her mother when he said t ‘Blessed is the one who accepts the Word of God and lives accordingly.’ Therefore, she is the most credible and competent to lead us to Jesus. In his public life, she followed him and in suffering when his disciples left out of fear, she fearlessly accompanied him, she knew the narrow road, passion and suffering of Jesus from close and knew well the reward of the faithful, the promise of new life, the glory of God, and life that has no end.

Mother Mary knew Jesus as God with us, the Savior of the needy and the one who stands with them in their struggles. Mother Mary knows that God’s promise of giving humanity new life is realized in Jesus. Humans must follow His faithfulness, she always admonishes all generations, “Do what He tells you.” Mother Mary teaches an important lesson: if we follow Jesus sincerely and live by His teaching, we will experience an abundance of blessings, a life full of joy and peace.

A WOMAN OF COURAGE

Mother Mary was deeply aware that her journey would not be easy, but she was equally aware that she was not alone; she was in the hands of God, and His Salvific plans would be fulfilled in Jesus. She was both a mother who cradled baby Jesus in her arms with inextinguishable affection and adored him with the belief of a fervent believer.

After receiving the heavenly news of being chosen by God to be the mother of the Lord, Mother Mary does not seek any privilege or prestigious place for herself. Instead, on hearing about her cousin Elizabeth being with a child in her old age, Mother Mary decides to visit her and take care of her.



Mother Mary shows that to be a handmaid of God means to be at the service of all those in need of our love, attention, and care. Mother Mary's submission to God means to offer her humble service with total and trusting acceptance of the divine plan of salvation.

Jesus reminds us that he carries the Cross of our pain and suffering, but we are never free of our responsibility of collaborating with God by following him and knowing that his grace is always available to the believers, but he waits for our readiness to accept participation in his redeeming mission in the world. To be a Christian is to live a "cruciform life," a kind of existence that is shaped by and through the cross. Thus, the Cross of Jesus does not simply teach us that Christ has died, but also teaches us how to live, a life that is lived for others with sacrificial love.

The support Jesus treasured most in his passion is the silent presence of Mother Mary. She understands him and his suffering best because she is the human collaborator in God's salvific plans.

She is deeply aware of God's life-giving presence in human life and transforming intervention in human history. Her presence gives Jesus strength, and her love comforts and lessens his pain. Her loving presence heals not only the wounds that pain his sacred body but also heals him from human betrayal, rejection, and aggression. Mother Mary teaches us that silent support and prayers are of great importance for those suffering on life's journey, as is our sensitivity and concern for them. Our loving, faithful service and reassuring Christian presence are also significant, for the good of society.

For every man and woman in this world, the meeting of Jesus and his mother on the way to Calvary is a powerful event which reflects the lives of so many mothers today who are severely suffering for their children, those wrongly convicted, unjustly treated for their faith convictions, oppressed and exploited, abused and discriminated, hungry and forced to live in subhuman conditions. The meeting of Jesus and his mother is a source of courage and strength, grace and blessing for all mothers. We are reminded to respect our

mothers and value their unconditional love and sacrifice in our lives. Jesus gives Mother Mary to us so that we might have a mother who is always there for us.

In our suffering and uncertainty in life, she is always there with her motherly love to console, encourage, and strengthen us. Our Blessed Mother will always be a blessing for the whole of humanity, especially those who come to her for her motherly affection, consolation, and her intercession in their various needs. She understands us, stands with us when we struggle and strengthens us when life becomes difficult and burdensome. She is our prayerful companion and a most reliable mediator to intercede for us to her Son and Our Lord.



2.

THE FIRST PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF IZMIR



The first meeting of the Pastoral Council of the Archdiocese of Izmir took place on 4th October 2025 at the holy name of Mary, Parish, Bornova. This historic gathering is taking place on St. Francis of Assisi's Feast. The Gospel life was his way of being in the world and Christ reflected in all he said and did. His mission was to restore the original harmony and beauty in the Creation, and he wished the whole creation to live as God's family and to praise together their Creator, God the Father. He urged all his brothers and sisters to be always faithful, obedient and loyal to the Church.

Archbishop Martin invoked the Pastoral Council and expressed his appreciation for the wonderful work which is going at the level of the parishes. However there is no place of complacency in the work of the Lord, we always need to be vigilant servant and wise virgins, always building on what is already achieved and acknowledging that there is always space of improvement. Synodal process was a historic moment, indeed it has been the working of the

Holy Spirit, a most needed gift to the Church. It provided the light of faith, hope and courage to the Church. It has awoken the Church to the realization that it could only become a vibrant universal community when the local communities at the parish level have a true sense of belonging and actively participate in the life of the church. Thus, each member has a role to play, it has to become a participatory Church. Faithful need to be listened to as equal partners in the mission of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of the living giving and loving presence of the Risen Lord.

The work of evangelization cannot be confined to small group of experts, it is a responsibility of all believers by virtue of their baptism. It is a challenge to overcome the ghetto mentality, ready to think and beyond personal interests and benefacts. This demands a process of conversion and willingness to form the family of those who listen the Word of God, integrate in their lives and reflects in concrete actions. We are edified by the fact that over the years the number of people searching for Christ, the catechumens have been growing. But a divided community would be counter witness. There is only one Church, only the efforts which contribute towards the strengthening of this church would be valid. Further, the communities where there is a bond together, people can share with each other their spiritual, social and economic problems and try to resolve. They can also strengthen and actively contribute to the social institutes of the Church. The process of the realization of the Synodal Church entails regular self-examination and conversion. Each time discovering new and alternative ways by which the Holy Spirit is leading the community in its mission to be counterculture to the values which are oppressive, destructive for humanity and our common home.

Archbishop Martin emphasised that by listening, reflecting and discussing the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful together in the Pastoral Council, effective and concerted effort can be made in realizing the mission of Christ in the contextual reality of this Archdiocese.

The priests / pastors and lay representatives from all parishes of the



Archdiocese of Izmir participated in the Pastoral Council and reported/ shared about the various spiritual and pastoral activities of their respective parishes. The vision of each parish is to model their parish communities after the example of the early church described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:14), being founded on faith in Christ, to remain united in prayer, be guided in their mutual relationship by love and mercy and be evangelizing communities that make sincere efforts to witness to the transforming power of the gospel in the midst of the society.

1. After establishing the Diocesan Pastoral Council, there is a need for establishing Parish Council in each parish which will enhance community spirit in the parish, update statistics, encourage greater participation, form and animate various religious groups, like choirs, lectors, Legion of Mary, etc.
2. Catechizes for children and adults as well as on-going formation for the catechumens be assured. Annual Retreat, Days of Recollection and Pilgrimages will be helpful for spiritual formation of the faithful.
3. The modern means of communication be engaged for the formation and evangelization.
4. Greater participation of youth is needed in the building and strengthening of the local church. Various religious and social programs be organized for youth at the level of parishes and Archdiocese.

At the end of the meeting Archbishop Martin thanked the organizing Committee consisted of Fr. Adrian OFM, Miss Dephiny and Fr. Moses OFM Conv and the participants for their enthusiastic participation in this historic gathering. He said let us continue our faith journey together, each one of us is a God send in our life, to unfold God's plans for us. Therefore, every member of the community of believer is precious and sacred. May the Risen Lord bless all endeavors of the Archdiocese of Izmir to be salt of the earth and light of the world.



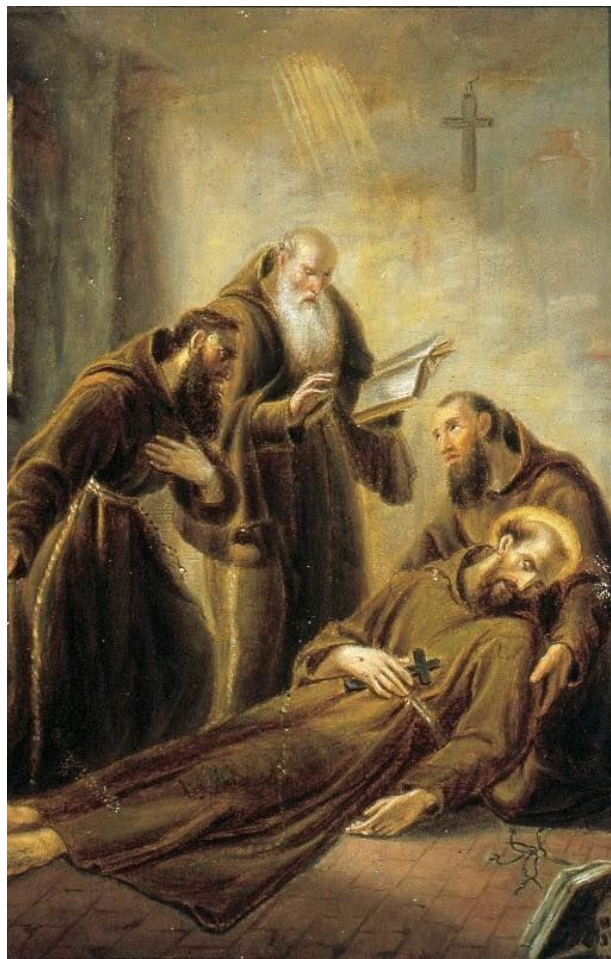


3.

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

The feast of St. Francis of Assisi was celebrated on 4th October 2025 at Franciscan Friary, Bornova. The Eucharistic Celebration was presided by Archbishop Martin Kmetec OFM Conv. Fr. Adrian OFM welcomed the Archbishop and the faithful on the feast day and wished that the St. Francis always unite us in the bond of fraternal love and communion. Archbishop Martin in his homily that that this year we are celebrating 800 years of the canticle of Creatures written

by St. Francis which is an inspiration and challenge to whole humanity to be responsible stewards of God's creation. St. Francis is the pattern saint of environment. He manifested deep respect and love for every creature. He could see the reflection of God in whole of creation. He wished all creation to sing with him the hymn of praise for the most loving and caring God. He called every creature his brother and sister, nobody was excluded from his family. Today our world is confronted with great ecological crisis.



On the name of progress, we are polluting our rivers and air which ensures our existence.

We must take St. Francis' ideal seriously to come out of slow death of humanity. We have to ask ourselves today what we can do to save our home, the earth. Does our way of life show our love for creation? How can we make others aware of this fact. Fr. Pascal OFM thanked the Archbishop, Priests, faithful and the friends of the community for their presence and prayers at this blessed occasion.





Metropolitan Archbishop of Izmir

LETTER TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF IZMIR

The Visit of Pope Leo XIV from 27–30 November

The announcement of Pope Leo XIV's visit to Türkiye has been made public. The Holy Father will visit the Christian communities in Türkiye between 27 and 30 November, after which he will continue on to Lebanon.

As part of his visit, he will first meet with the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and will then devote time to the Christian communities in the country. This visit is an important event for all of us and for our Church, one that will deepen our faith. It will remind us that we belong to the Church founded by Christ and rooted in the Paschal mystery, the sacred sacrament of salvation; it will strengthen our unity and fellowship.

The principal purpose of Pope Leo's visit is to meet Patriarch Bartholomew and to continue the ecumenical efforts of his predecessors. In accordance with the wishes of the late Pope Francis, he will visit Iznik (Nicaea) with Patriarch Bartholomew to commemorate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

He comes to deliver his message to us as the Holy Shepherd. We shall listen to his words of consolation and hope; and as followers of Jesus Christ, we should remain open to his encouragement to live ever more faithfully according to the values and principles of the Gospel.

During his discourses, the Pope will express his approach to dialogue with Islam; he will also address important matters such as world peace, and especially the ongoing efforts for peace in Palestine and throughout the Middle East.

Moreover, he comes as a pilgrim of hope. His visit will reflect his concern and solidarity with the excluded and the poor, and his desire to share Christianity's universal message with all people of goodwill.

Let us prepare for this visit through prayer and by deepening our faith. Let us see him as a great sign of the Father's love for us all. May God bless Pope Leo; may He grant him light and strength to guide his entire flock on the path of salvation.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary receive our intentions into her Immaculate Heart and present our prayers to her Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

With my heartfelt wishes, I greet you in Jesus Christ, our hope.

Fatima 10 October 2025

† Martin KMETEC, OFMConv
Metropolitan Archbishop of Izmir



CATHOLIC CHURC OF SMYRNA



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