From the Editor | September 15, 2025



Note: As readers of *The MAST Journal* know, our long-time editor, Eloise Rosenblatt, RSM, died unexpectedly during Holy Week. Ever the meticulous planner, Eloise, together with *The MAST Journal* Editorial Board had carefully designed journal issues through the end of 2025. Although I am acting as Interim Editor, the articles, author requests and process you read in this issue are Eloise's. Out of a sense of deep respect, the Editorial Board publishes these issues as Eloise had planned. We are developing a special issue dedicated to her varied work and her voluminous writing.

Dear Sisters, Associates, Companions and Friends of Mercy,

The current issue is dedicated to contemplation upon Mary. The Constitutions of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy remind us that "Because Mary entered fully into her

Son's mission she became the Mother of Mercy and our model of faith…Devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, prompts us to honor her in both prayer and action. In Mary's Magnificat, mysteries of the Rosary and other devotions, we find sources of reflection and renewal for our life and ministry." This issue of *The MAST Journal* articulates key ways in which contemporary persons understand the role of Mary and emulate the characteristics she models for us.

Long before any of us were capable of prayer to or reflection upon Mary, she was embedded deeply into our Catholic imaginations. Images of Mary abounded in church, Christmas cribs, holy cards. Family prayers began with the "Hail Mary," repeated over and over, especially in the Rosary. Hymns to Mary were likewise part of our early years, repeated not only during the month dedicated to her but throughout the Church year and feast days, processions and celebrations, both large and small. Religious psychologists remind us that these early images, sounds and experiences of Mary had a more profound influence upon our piety than hours and hours of theological examination. Therefore, this issue begins with the deeper, quieter reality of Mary before embarking upon theological reflection and analysis.

Boreta Singleton, RSM, invites us in her article "Oh with What Joy" us to revisit the earliest experiences many of us had of hearing Mary's name and praises sung. Boreta draws upon her own rich background of music, theology and African American spirituality to invite us to listen once more to those hymns that helped to form our own spiritual lives. She sagely notes that hymns to Mary, rather than elevating or distancing Our Lady from us draw her closer to our hearts and minds.

In August 2021, the **Institute Prayer and Ritual Committee** shared a rich resource with us in their "August Prayer of Our Lady." Through images, narrative and prayer they demonstrated to us that devotion to Mary, as mother, mentor and model, thrives throughout the world. We gratefully reprint that resource here to invite continued prayer and reflection. We invite you to share these images with the many people with whom you minister.

Luz Eugenia Álvarez, RSM, takes one of those images of Mary shared by the Prayer and Ritual Committee, bringing to her study a rich devotional, theological and feminist analysis of the vital role the image plays in contemporary Catholicism. In "Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Liberation or Oppression for Latina Women?" Luz Eugenia outlines the rich history of the Guadalupe apparitions as well as the deep

significance they had upon the faithful throughout the world, and especially among persons of Mexican descent. She challenges the reader to examine how each interprets this devotion, she further demonstrates the practical consequences of this devotion upon contemporary women.

Sharon Kerrigan, RSM, asks “Who is Mary for Contemporary Christians?” Each age and culture express their fundamental notion of the identity and role of woman. These concepts shape behavior, customs and even faith. Rooting her analysis in the Hellenistic contrast between the goddess the Egyptian mother-goddess Isis and Mary, the mother of Jesus, Sharon emphasizes the differences between these two feminine prototypes and shows that the qualities Mary expressed, particularly in her Magnificat hymn provide a solid foundation for a servant Church. The concepts that Vatican II used to explicate Mary’s identity and role later found voice in Pope Francis’s call for feminine qualities in the challenges of our contemporary world.

In “Mary, the Feminine Face of God,” **Aline Paris, RSM,** asserts that, while Mary is not God, she clearly expresses the feminine face of God to our contemporary world. Mary is depicted by believers in every age and culture, as the marvelous August prayer in this issue demonstrates. Relationship with Mary is deeply personal and wonderfully diverse. The Church celebrates myriad feasts of Mary and the faithful gather, asking for her intercession at Marian shrines throughout the world. Through Mary, Aline emphasizes, we see the face of God.

Mary Aquin O’Neill’s book, “Original Grace: the Mystery of Mary” was published posthumously in 2023. Recognizing a formidable contribution to Marian theology, *The MAST Journal* Editorial Board wanted to review the work. In the piece by **Maryanne Stevens, RSM**, we find not so much a review as a reflection on the import of this publication. While some may read O’Neill’s book as a feminist appeal for women’s ordination, Maryanne demonstrates the study’s rootedness in the earlier theological concept of Mary as *co-redemptrix*. Mary Aquin revisits this “dangerous memory” and Maryanne argues that continued study in this area may lead to further developments not only regarding Mary, but also regarding the role of women in the Church.

The current issue of *The MAST Journal f*ocuses on Mary. It is the hope of the Editorial Board that this provides our readers with a deeper spiritual and theological foundation as we look forward to the next issue, concentrating on the theme of Women, one of the Critical Concerns of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy.

Yours,



Patricia Talone, RSM
Interim Editor of *The MAST Journal*