

Catholic

UPDATE

© 2021 LIGUORI
PUBLICATIONS,
A REDEMPTORIST
MINISTRY.

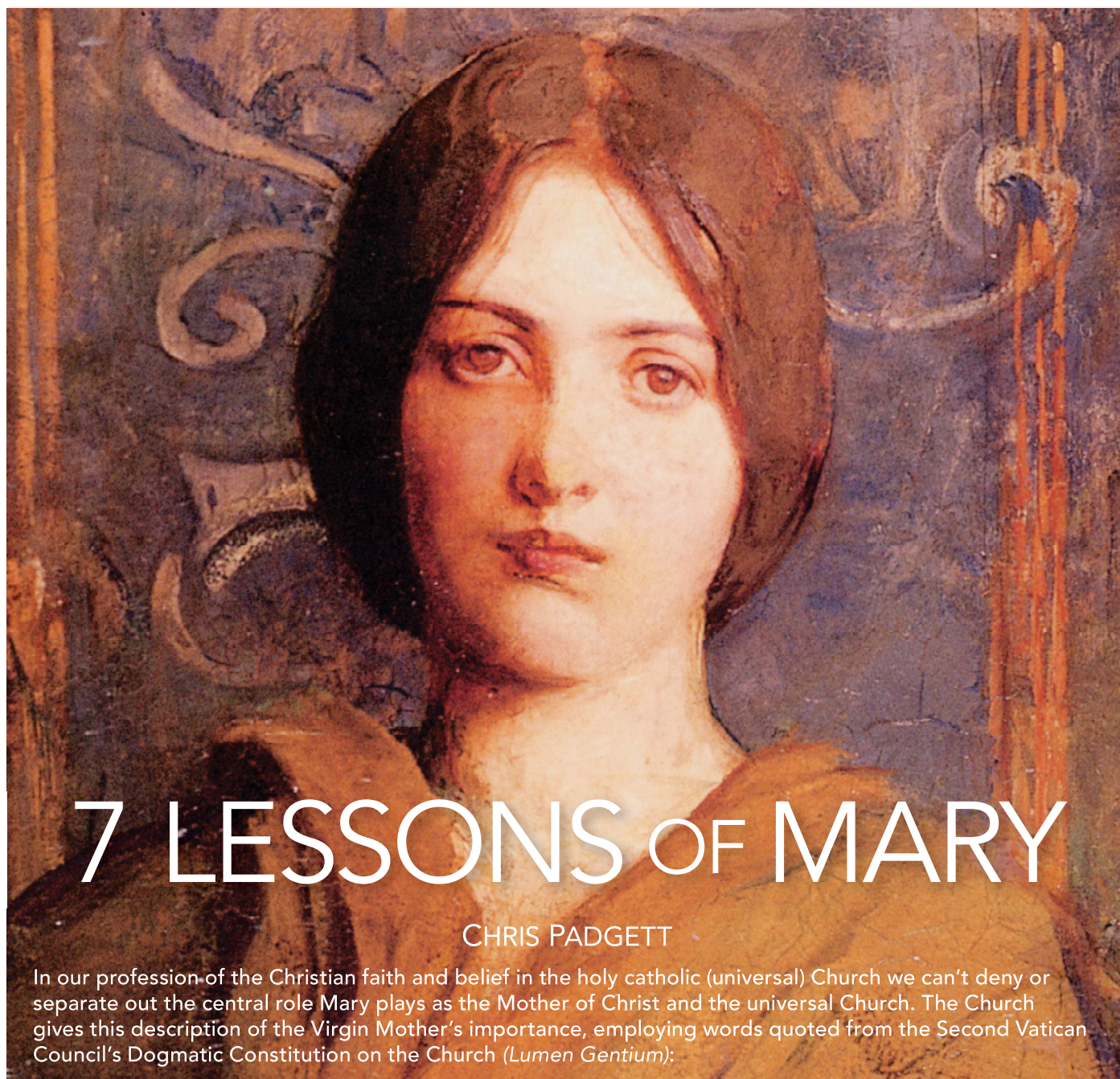
ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI, MO
63057-9999

800-325-9521
LIGUORI.ORG

PHOTOCOPYING
PROHIBITED.

C2105A

MAY 2021



7 LESSONS OF MARY

CHRIS PADGETT

In our profession of the Christian faith and belief in the holy catholic (universal) Church we can't deny or separate out the central role Mary plays as the Mother of Christ and the universal Church. The Church gives this description of the Virgin Mother's importance, employing words quoted from the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*):

By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Thus, she is a "preeminent and...wholly unique member of the Church;" indeed, she is the "exemplary realization" of the Church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 966

Veneration of Mary is a natural consequence of Christology, so how much do we allow this reality to be fully realized in our personal faith journey? As you reflect on this, it's likely you can identify highs and lows in your fidelity to the Blessed Mother. In this publication we will explore seven lessons from Mary that can help strengthen our devotion to "our Mother in the order of grace" (CCC 966) and our commitment to Christ.



LESSON 1 A Rich Wellspring

You can never exhaust the fullness of what God has done in, to, and through Mary. The more we learn about who she is, about what her *yes* means

throughout history, the more we should be able to reflect a deep devotion. Mary applies to us now in what it means to be a spiritual person. She is present today, waiting for us to go deeper in our relationship with her Son. The more we study and reflect on Mary, the more we understand that she is teaching us how to love Jesus.



LESSON 2 A Faithful Friend

Sometimes in our goal to actually live the faith, the things we know to be true seem to slip through our fingers. Each of us is in desperate need of

Christ's redemption. It is easy to fall into a state of despair as we navigate life's daily struggles, but we can find peace in knowing that Mary is with us always as a faithful friend. It would be easy to imagine her ready to give up on us, knowing we are flawed, broken, weak, and struggling. We may even question whether we have much to offer her Son. Even so, she continues to stand with us, guiding our heart, and loving us despite our inadequacies. She is a committed friend who cares.



LESSON 3 A Loving Wife and Mother

I've been married for more than twenty-five years and have nine children.

I've also taught courses on Christian marriage, and as a result have garnered

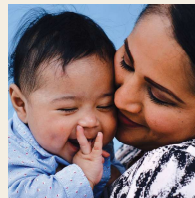
a deep appreciation for the beauty of the Holy Family. For me, realizing that Mary's love for Joseph was so complete—even before the Christ Child came into her life—has been a wellspring in my spiritual development. The love of Mary and Joseph was real. As we continue to look at Mary as a loving wife, we recognize how powerful and important Joseph is, both to Mary and to Jesus. Let us learn how to let Christ be more present in our family by modeling Mary's role as a wife and mother.



LESSON 4 Our Top Model

Mary loved God more than anything. Often we tend to see Mary as so holy and unique that we are unable to model her witness in our own life. But it is her

closeness with God that makes her model so valuable and imitable—both to men and women. Mary's life is a model of spiritual authenticity and holiness. Despite our own behaviors, as our love for God deepens, our actions should have a Marian quality about them.

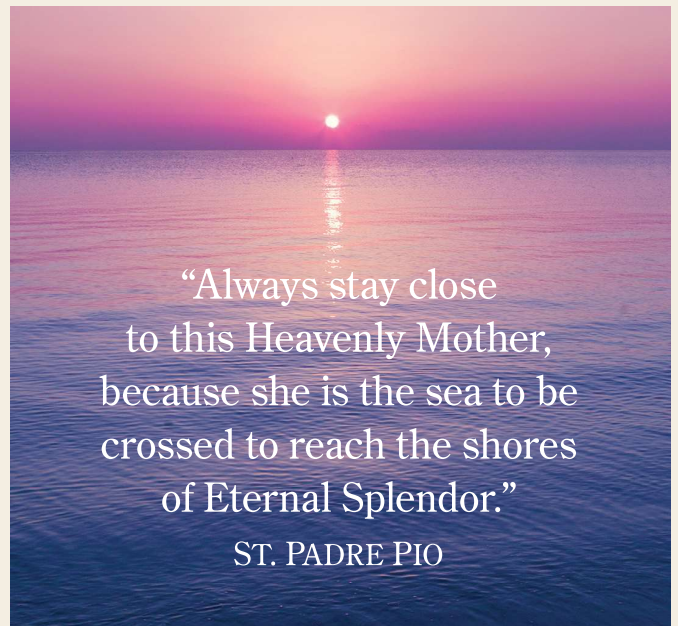


LESSON 5 Adoring Disciple

I want to look upon Jesus in the Eucharist as Mary looked upon the infant in her arms. I want to speak to him with love and soak up his every

word. I can do this best at Mass, of course, and in moments of quiet adoration. Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, is waiting for me to come and listen, to come and see, to come and worship. Will I be like the Wise Men who traveled from afar to gaze upon Jesus? Or will I be selfish like the innkeeper who chose not to give what he had?

Too often, we are like the innkeeper: Mary found a way to adore Jesus regardless of the circumstance. She adored the Child in her womb while neighbors likely made snide remarks or questioned her purity. Her whole life was built around finding ways to make more space in her life for Jesus. Let us strive to grow our adoration for Christ. Mary's example teaches us how.





LESSON 6

Deeper Discipline and Discipleship

We don't achieve a spiritual plateau on this side of eternity. There is always more to learn from Christ. We must continuously find ways to go deeper in our walk with God. The key is to understand that spiritual discipline without discipleship is pointless. We must remember that Christ calls us and is teaching us daily. We follow Jesus because we know he wants to be with us. Mary knows this, too. We are being called and filled with the grace to say *yes* to the Lord.



LESSON 7

To Be or Not to Be

This should be a source of rich meditation. The point is both simple and profoundly complex: We must learn how to simply be. Often, we spend too much of our time trying to position ourselves into a place where we think God can love us. The truth is we are loved even when we fail—God loves us regardless. Knowing and embracing this understanding of unconditional love, we are free to live a life that isn't restrained by fear. Mary understood from the start that God already loves us. Even as a young, poor, and easily overlooked woman, Mary said a daring YES! Thanks be to God.

Chris Padgett, a Catholic convert, is a speaker, musician, and author. He has a master's degree in theology from Franciscan University and has been involved in public ministry for more than twenty-five years. Chris is married to his high school sweetheart, Linda, and the couple has nine children. The family lives in central New York. To learn more, check out chrispadgett.com and his YouTube channel, Happy Place Homestead.

Passing on the Faith

Q. Our daughter is thirteen. As parents, how can we use Mary as a role model for her?

A. The first step is telling our children Mary's story from their earliest days into their adulthood. Begin with the mysteries of the rosary and describe what Mary may have been thinking and feeling as she gave her life to God. By age thirteen, your daughter is ready for the tough questions of faith. Ask her to put herself in the annunciation moment, the trip to visit Elizabeth, the birth far from home, the great escape to Egypt. Talk about how she would feel in those situations and the strength it took for Mary to act with grace. Finally, teach your daughter to pray to Mary when her life gets difficult. Let her know that, even when her earthly mother is gone, her heavenly Mother will never leave her side.



Q. How do I respond to my friend, a non-Catholic, who still believes we worship Mary?

A. Catholics pray with Mary to Jesus. We invite Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to be united with us in our deepest and most heartfelt needs as we bring them to her Son. She acts as an intercessor for us. We ask Mary to be our spokesperson because of the very special bond Jesus has with his Mother. Worshipping Mary is never part of Catholic prayer to Mary. While we may thank her, ask for her help and even praise her for all she does for us, worship is meant only for the God she worships with us.

Q. Mary was open to God's challenges. How can our parish look to Mary as we face our own?

A. Create a column in the parish bulletin or website asking parishioners to share their personal experience of Mary. Let the witness of ordinary people make the connection between Mary's life and our lives. Second, have an evening of prayer and discussion based on the scriptural moments of the joyful mysteries of the rosary. Read the story from Scripture and design one question per mystery that relates to the here and now. These questions will make our heavenly Mother's story come alive as we see her courage in light of our everyday challenges.

JEANNE HUNT



A Marian Garden Gathering

Preparation: Ask the participants to bring one or more annual garden plants and a small garden trowel. Prepare the soil at an outdoor site for planting. If the parish has an outdoor shrine to Mary, that is a perfect spot. Provide copies of a litany. A good resource for Marian devotions is *Devotions in Honor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help*, © 2000 Liguori Publications (804113).

OPENING HYMN

"Immaculate Mary" (*Parochial Hymn Book*
© Jeremiah Cummings, Boston, 1877)

PRAYER

Blessed Mother, we gather to honor and remember you. We remember your courage and say thank you. We remember your selfless love and ask you to teach us to follow your example. We remember your purity and ask you to intercede for us as we seek to be pure of heart.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:46–55: The Magnificat

RITUAL

(Choose one Marian litany to recite.)

Leader: Join with me as we honor Mary with this litany.

RECITE THE LITANY OF LORETO

(Also known as The Litany of the Blessed Virgin)

Leader: Imagine that you are with the Blessed Mother right now. What would she want to say to you? Let us sit quietly for a moment and listen to her with our hearts.

(After a short period of silence, invite everyone to process to an outdoor site where all will join in planting a Mary garden. When flowers are planted, conclude the gathering with the Hail Mary.)

JEANNE HUNT

Marian Feasts on the Roman Catholic Calendar

The Solemnity of Mary,
Mother of God on the octave of Christmas

Our Lady of Lourdes: February 11

The Annunciation: March 25

The Visitation: May 31

The Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the Church:
Monday following Pentecost

The Immaculate Heart of Mary:
Saturday following the Second Sunday
after Pentecost

Our Lady of Mount Carmel: July 16

Dedication of St. Mary Major: August 5

The Assumption of Mary: August 15

The Queenship of Mary: August 22

The Birth of Mary: September 8

Our Lady of Sorrows: September 15

Our Lady of the Rosary: October 7

The Presentation of Mary
(in the Temple as a child): November 21

The Immaculate Conception: December 8

Our Lady of Guadalupe: December 12
(United States)

Subscribe to *Catholic Update* today at Subscriptions.Liguori.org. Individual and bulk subscriptions are offered to suit your needs. More than 250 back issues of *Catholic Update* are available, with discounts provided for larger quantities. See the complete list at Liguori.org/Catholic-Update.

Imprimi Potest: Stephen T. Rehauer, CSsR, Provincial, Denver Province, the Redemptorists

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists. To learn more about the Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com. Scripture texts in this work are from New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC.

EDITOR: ELIZABETH A. HERZING-GEBHART