



Seton Home



Study School

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“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



April 2007

Mary Magdalene

After Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on that glorious first Easter Sunday morning, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, one of the disciples. Only the twelve apostles were the first official witnesses to Jesus’ Resurrection and His appearances (Acts 10:39-42), but she was the first to tell the apostles that Jesus had risen. Because of this great and unique privilege and her life of penance after her conversion during Jesus’ public ministry, she has been revered by the Church since early times. Her life proposes and edifying example to home schooling families.

Mary Magdalene was a public sinner who repented after she met Jesus. Because she was sorry for her sins, Jesus forgave her, but He told her to go and sin no more. Her repentance teaches us and our children about the infinite love and forgiveness that Jesus has for those who are sorry for their sins. Her life teaches us and our children the importance of being truly sorry for our sins, of humbly asking for forgiveness. It shows us, however, that mere sorrow and repentance for past sins is insufficient. We must also do penance for our past sins, and be determined to “sin no more.”

Mary Magdalene was at the foot of the Cross with Mary, the Blessed Mother of Jesus. When almost all the disciples had fled out of fear, Mary Magdalene was willing to stand up with Jesus in spite of the mocking crowd, in spite of the soldiers’ fearful and savage treatment of Jesus. This

witness of Mary Magdalene helps us and our children realize that there will be times in our lives when being a Christian and standing up for Christian values will be difficult. Part of the difficulty is knowing that, even as we testify to the truth and to the proper moral life, we ourselves often fail to live up to the ideals that we espouse. We should pray to Mary Magdalene in such situations; she will help us to have the courage we need to witness to Jesus despite our own unworthiness.

After the burial of Jesus, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to wash the Body of Jesus with perfumed ointment, the normal procedure at that time. This action on the part of Mary Magdalene should teach us and our children the importance of being generous in caring for others. We cannot be so engrossed in our own problems that we neglect to see and help others with their problems.

The appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection is the first appearance recorded in the Gospels. Mary Magdalene did not recognize Jesus at first, nor did the apostles recognize Him when they saw Him later. The divinity of Jesus, the absolute perfection and sinlessness of Jesus, is so brilliantly beautiful in His glorified Body that it was beyond their ability to recognize Him Whom they saw every day for three years! We need to remind ourselves and our children about the perfections of God, such as His infinite beauty. We must remain free of sin so that someday

Jesus will speak our name in a loving way, calling us by name as He called Mary Magdalene in His appearance. Only when she heard him speak was she immediately able to recognize Him. This hearkens back to the story in the Gospels of the Good Shepherd, whose sheep know his call when they hear him.

Mary Magdalene was the first to run and tell the apostles that “He is risen!” Mary Magdalene, a repentant sinner, was the first to carry the most important message in history, from the Risen Christ to the leaders of His Church: “He is risen!” We need to remind ourselves and our children that Jesus is counting on us, His followers, to carry the Gospel Message to others in our community. Our lessons in our Catholic Faith are not to be kept within us but to be shared and put into practice.

Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Mary Magdalene, help us home schooling parents to teach our children by word and example, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, the Son of God. Help us to recognize that the Resurrection is the most important event in the history of mankind, and that we must be like Mary Magdalene in standing with Jesus and courageously spreading the Gospel Message.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

*by Dr. Mary Kay Clark
Director, Seton Home Study School*

I have two children close in age and would like to teach them together if possible. Am I wrong in holding one back or in pushing one ahead?

While we want to give each child what is best for his abilities, at the same time, we need to be realistic about what we can accomplish. It does not help a student if you decide to push him up a grade level in math to keep him challenged, but you are not able to help him at all because you are so busy with the younger children. Sometimes while it seems a child should have more challenge, it also means more time needed by a parent to explain more advanced concepts as they come along.

It makes more sense to consider having such a child stay at the average grade level where he can review and practice the concepts he has learned, but also help with the math lessons of a younger child. It not only gives your child drill which is always helpful and strengthens earlier-learned concepts, it also teaches patience and generosity. At the same time, it helps you so you don't need to spend as much time on math with the older student. Additionally, if the older student helps the younger, you won't need to spend as much math time with the younger student.

Time management is an important skill that home schooling mothers need to learn and, perhaps just as important, to learn to be efficient. Putting two children together in their studies, for a course or two, or for a whole grade level, can benefit children and teaching mothers in many ways.

I married a man with a strong personality. I want him to be the leader, for me and for the children. How can I be the teacher and yet show the children that their father is the proper leader of the family?

Some mothers tell the children that while she is the teacher, Dad is the principal. This emphasizes to the children that mother recognizes their father as head of the home and the final authority in the family, and at the same time, helps father to be obeyed a little more quickly by the children. It also helps to encourage obedience by the children when fathers want to be more involved with the home schooling.

When mothers defer to the father when questions arise, whether they are questions of content or questions of decision-making, children understand who is the final authority. It also gives mother the opportunity to discuss situations with her husband and not make quick judgments herself which gives a certain calmness and less argumentation. For some reason, children tend to argue with their mother but not with their father!

Of course, the two of you have authority together over the children. You don't want the children to think that the two of you are at odds. You want the children to understand that both mother and father have high expectations for them.

The younger children I can teach, but I'm finding it difficult to find time to teach my high school students. How do I teach them when I seem to have so little time?

Most high school students can learn good study skills and can do much of their work on their own. Certainly the history, science, and religion courses are straightforward in their presentation. It is a matter of applying proven methods for being successful students. We do repeat these methods in several of the courses, and we have a free online study skills course on our website.

Sometimes students will argue with their mother or father, insisting that they can do their assignments the way they want to do it, or the way that works for them. Parents should not allow their students to "do it my way" unless they consistently earn very good grades. Otherwise, insist they follow the "tried and true" methods for learning.

The first step is to look over the whole chapter, to read the headings and subheadings, to read the questions in each section and/or at the end of the chapter, to look at the illustrations and read the information under the pictures, to read the first line (the topic sentence) for each paragraph assigned to be read. If there is time, write a chapter outline based on the headings and subheadings.

Putting two children together in their studies can benefit children and teaching mothers in many ways.

Once all these preliminary steps are done, the student should read the whole chapter. Any words or phrases which answer any of the section or chapter questions should be underlined or highlighted. They could be included in the outline, or they could be numbered in the margin according to the outline.

Some students may find that reading a chapter into a voice recorder and then listening to it will give a little extra help for memorizing. When preparing for the chapter test, the outline as well as the underlined or highlighted sections should be studied and memorized.

It really is a matter of motivation, though. Parents must try to make high school students understand that their work at this stage in life is very important. In order to be accepted by the college of their choice, high school students need to apply themselves and earn good grades and be prepared for the SAT or ACT. If

they understand that this matters to the rest of their lives, then students can be more motivated to apply themselves.

Do you think it is a good idea to send high school students to the library for doing their daily work?

Yes, I do to some extent. The big benefit is the lack of distractions. The college libraries have study carrels for more quiet and privacy and focus on the job at hand.

While it's good for high school students to help around the house like this, they also need blocks of time to focus solely on their studies.

In addition, the whole atmosphere at a college library is oriented toward learning. Everyone there is trying to study or find information. Students are not looking for an escape; there is no eating or drinking or socializing (not much, anyway). The atmosphere encourages students to study and do their work in a serious study atmosphere. Furthermore, more information is easily available if a student has a question. Resources include thousands of books and magazines. Computers and other technical equipment, and librarians, are available.

A disadvantage is that the student doesn't necessarily know if books he chooses are in conformity with Catholic principles. Certainly parents need to give direction to a student who is reading books from a college library.

One thing we hear from high school students, especially in a large family, is that they are often called upon throughout the day to change a diaper or clean up a spill or watch a younger child. While it's good for high school students to help around the house like this, they also need

blocks of time to focus solely on their studies. Going to a library or other quiet outside place can give them these blocks of time. Students should not spend the whole day away from home, but perhaps two or three hours each morning might do some good.

I am having trouble helping my son with the book reports. Do you have some specific tips to help my son in 5th grade?

For students in the elementary years, it is important to help your child understand the book in a broad way before beginning to read. This can be done by reading the Chapter Notes on the Seton web site and discussing what the book is about. As your son begins to read each chapter, he can read the chapter notes again.

There are specific directions for each book report. A topic sentence for the book report is given to point out what the student should be looking for. Write the topic in the front or back cover of the book so your son can refer to it as he reads. When he finds something which would seem to apply to the topic sentence, he should highlight the sentence, or make a checkmark on the page.

If possible, encourage your son to tell you what happened in each chapter. Have a discussion about the items he marked to prepare for the report. When your son is ready to write his report, you should be discussing it with him. Often, students will have trouble starting to type a report, but they are able to discuss the questions and give answers. You should talk about the assignment, and he can point out the pages and the items which give evidence that proves the point of the topic sentence.

Some students at this age struggle with their handwriting and find it slows down getting their thoughts on paper. If your son writes very slowly, help him to learn to type on the computer. Students like for their reports to look good on paper, so he should be interested in learning to type. If necessary, ask your son to dictate his report so you can type it.

We are beginning the last quarter of the year, and I would like to finish up by June. Can you give me any hints for moving ahead more quickly?

First you need to make sure your children are focusing on their work. If your children are spending too much time in play, in attending local home schooling activities, in baby-sitting, in doing projects around the house, you need to pull the children back from those activities and have them focus on their schoolwork, their primary job during their young years.

Second, you need to make sure that you are focusing on your home schooling and not spending too much time out of the house for one reason or another. Things do come up—illnesses, accidents, lost jobs, etc.—but the children must keep going with the home schooling. Perhaps a high school or college student would come in and help if you are pulled away due to a family emergency.

Third, focus on the most important subjects. At the elementary level, the primary subjects are religion, reading and phonics, and math. These are subjects that build on the concepts learned previously; if a student misses certain lessons, future lessons are difficult. Other important subjects are vocabulary, English, and spelling. These are important but can be caught up later if necessary. History and science can be learned over the summer; the concepts are repeated in future years.

It's a good idea to look ahead to what is left in each subject. Look at the quarter report forms to find out what needs to be sent to Seton for grading. Knowing what's coming up, you can find what concepts are being emphasized and pay particular attention to those things, while taking less time on other concepts. Also, if you think your child knows some areas particularly well, then cut back or skip those areas altogether.

We receive the most requests to excuse the book reports in the last quarter of the year, but the book reports, after religion, are most important because they teach inductive thinking and analysis. Students are required to read a story, come to a conclusion, and prove the conclusion with examples from the book. While it is important to memorize objective facts, it is just as important (if not more important) to think about the facts and what they mean.

Love of Learning

by Ginny Seuffert

This column was inspired by a mom who is starting to panic as junior high school approaches. She has a large family and schoolwork takes up a good part of her day. She finds that helping her younger students leaves very little time for the older ones, and although they do pretty well on their own, she is still concerned. Cracking the books is plain old hard work, and she worries they will lose their love of learning. She has heard about all those fun projects that abound in home education literature, projects that she just does not have the time for. She was thinking that maybe she should switch from Seton, for science and history, to unit studies (sometimes called thematic units), and called me for recommendations.

I had to say that I have not been impressed with the thematic units I have seen. One major objection is that the vast majority are not Catholic, and I, for one, have not given up my personal time for the past seventeen years to give my children a Protestant or a secular education! Additionally, although parents can make any program a learning experience, no single binder, no matter how big and fat, can possibly hope to provide a rigorous curriculum for eight grades as many claim to do. (I am also not sacrificing my time for my kids to get an inferior education.) My friends who have used thematic units report that they can require lots of time and money, and although mom and kids generally enjoy them, they do not claim to receive major educational benefits. As one home schooling mom told me, "Unit studies are fun, but they are more recreational than educational."

Like my friend, many home schooling moms want learning to be a lively and engaging experience, but before I offer a few tips to perk up your school day, please allow me to put in the good word for serious learning. It is only in recent decades that parents, no doubt influenced by Sesame Street and Baby Einstein, have become convinced that academics must be entertaining. Teachers in institutional schools wear

themselves out making classes lively so the TV/computer game generation will actually pay attention.

Somewhere along the line, we forgot that learning, in and of itself, should give pleasure. We forget that hard work leads to strong character. We forget that formal schooling, like the Seton program, can be recreational, but first and foremost, it is *intended* to be educational.

In many ways, what the Seton program does is provide a framework and give students the tools for a lifetime of independent learning. For example, as early as first grade, *American History 1 for Young Catholics* gives children the stories of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Hopefully reading the relatively short chapters, and discussing them with Mom or siblings, will capture the young learner's imagination and lead to a trip to the public library. There children might find other books or videos about these great men. As time and geography allow, the family can plan a trip to Washington's home in Mount Vernon or the Lincoln Museum in Springfield, Illinois, or one of the many other sites that offer insight into the thoughts and actions of these American leaders. Perhaps the children can memorize the Gettysburg Address and show off for Dad when he gets home. There is nothing boring or laborious about book learning. In fact, it can lead to many hours of enjoyment and family interaction. While hands-on learning can be fun, and it has its place, it cannot take the place of serious study.

Predictably, your children will at times complain that some daily assignments are "boring"—and they are right. Drilling math facts and memorizing spelling words are hardly fun and exciting, even if they are necessary. That's why for generations, teachers have used flash cards and spelling bees to liven things up, and you can too. On the other hand, do not forget that completing assignments, even the "boring" ones, in a satisfactory fashion, benefits not only the child's intellect, but also his character. Anything worthwhile in this world requires hard work and consistent effort, and we home schooling

parents need to raise adults who have experience with both. College students cannot complain to their professors that a particular assignment is tedious or uninteresting. The professor doesn't care. Employers feel the same way when assigning tasks in the workplace. Do the job; do it on time; do it well, or the company will find someone else to do it. As a homemaker, I can assure you that making beds and folding laundry—for almost four decades—has been less than thrilling, but nonetheless dull household tasks need to be done to maintain order and harmony. Children learn to be responsible and hardworking by completing monotonous tasks in the same satisfactory fashion as they complete the more enjoyable ones.

None of this is to say that our children must become bent-over little bookworms. Quite the opposite! Children who develop lively intellects tend to have even livelier personalities, and to achieve impressive goals. A good motto is: Work hard and play hard. (A terrific book for parents to read about how this worked in a twentieth century one-room schoolhouse is *The Thread That Runs So True: A Mountain School Teacher Tells His Story* by Jesse Stuart.) Here are a few ideas to implement "work hard/play hard" in Seton homes:

- Give the children a regular, predictable schedule that includes an early start for the school day, and designated breaks for household chores and playtime.
- As the weather allows, make sure that your students, including high schoolers, get plenty of fresh air and sunshine.
- Try to assign household chores that require physical labor like mowing the lawn, raking leaves or sweeping. Nothing like a bit of exercise to get the blood flowing to the brain!
- Come up with a fun incentive to finish schoolwork. For example, after the children finish third quarter, the family will take a trip to a national park or the state capital.

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The Immaculate Heart of Mary Coalition is proud to present the Sixth Annual



Immaculate Heart of Mary National Home School and Parent Conference 2007

Authentic Catholic Education: The Parental Duty

LOCATION:

Dulles Expo and Conference Center - North Hall

Washington D.C./Dulles Airport, 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly, VA 20153

Friday, June 8, 2007 9:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M.
Saturday, June 9, 2007 9:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

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www.IHMConference.org

Please visit our website for more detailed information as it becomes available, including: speaker information, vendor listing and links, schedule, directions, hotel information, local churches, etc. Please help spread the word. Prayers and donations appreciated.

This conference is for everyone, not just home schooling families. We love children, but must restrict attendance at talks only to adults, teens, and nursing babies.

IHM Coalition P.O. Box 574 Linden, VA 22642-0574 540-636-1946 (phone)
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The Reason for Lent

It seems that it was just yesterday that we took down our Christmas decorations which we kept up until the traditional Feast of the Three Kings on January 6; now we are celebrating the season of Lent.

There are those who groan whenever they hear the word *Lent*, but perhaps it is because they have never seriously pondered the purpose and meaning of Lent. The real purpose of Lent is twofold: 1) to repent, and 2) to learn how to say “no” to self so as the better to say no to future temptations.

Our Divine Lord has told us in Scripture, “Unless you repent you shall likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3) He has further stated, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself take up his Cross and follow me.” (Mt. 16:24) Christ makes it quite clear that penance is the path His disciples must follow.

Lent then is a time to repent of our past sins and offenses, and to make a firm resolve to do better in the future. It is a time to take inventory of our spiritual life. It is a spiritual check-up.

To celebrate Easter properly, it is best to go to Confession on or before Ash Wednesday and promise God that we will use the entire season of Lent to ready ourselves for a personal conversion and in this way to be better ready to celebrate with Christ His Resurrection. Hopefully, we will use the entire season of Lent to say no to temptation and to embrace daily crosses in order to be a new creation, a new man of courage.

During Lent, the Church imposes on everyone over 14 the obligation of abstaining from meat on all Fridays of Lent. Abstinence does not end at age 69, like the fast. All are obliged who are not ill. I have heard some teenagers who are not used to any discipline ask, “Why could I eat meat last Friday and now that it is Lent, I can’t?” I usually remind them that the Church still

prefers that all Catholics refrain from meat on all Fridays, but those who do not should perform some other form of penance once a week. Lent brings into our lives a new set of rules. Why does Lent initiate new laws? Sacrifice is very often difficult and irksome. Love, however, makes sacrifice easy; perfect love can make it a joy—so says the marriage ceremony. Selfish people do not often stay married very long. We give in proportion to our love. If I love only myself, I will spend every waking moment putting my will and my comfort first. Husbands and wives are constantly hurt by spouses who never learned to think of another. Such a tendency is again a reason to practice sacrifice. If we are striving to love God, then the sacrifices we make for Him are never too difficult. A man who truly loves his wife will find that the same principle holds for the married life.

As we grow up, temptations to sin are encountered every day. We must learn to say no to anger; we must say no to impurity. We practice this by saying no to an extra dessert, no to excessive drinking, no to disobedience and no to sensuality. If I cannot say no to candy, ice cream or cake, there is a great possibility that I will find it very difficult to say no to promiscuity. Sacrifice prepares us to choose God and to say no to temptation. Even small sacrifices help us make our way toward God more securely. Lent forces us to obey Church law and in so doing we submit our judgment; we submit our own will. It forces us to make a choice, God or Mammon. We cannot serve two masters. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that the Lord God showed him a vision of dry bones (Ezekiel 37: 1-14). God then asked the prophet, “Can these bones come back to life?” The Lord commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones. The bones then came together, flesh and sinew joined bone

to bone and they came back to life. God then told the prophet these bones were the house of Israel who had lost hope and who had been cut off (Ez. 38:11). The Lord God then promised to open their graves and bring them back to life.

**O my people I will put my Spirit in you that you may live and I will settle you upon your land....
(Ez. 38:13-14).**

Some of us have become dry bones. Some have long since stopped listening to authentic teaching. Many pick and choose the doctrines they agree with. They have joined theologians who tickle their ears with modernist ideas. Like the Israelites of old, these have taken on the views of the pagans who surround them. They ignore the Magisterium of the Church which is the guardian of truths revealed to us by Christ. They have disregarded, or in some cases, never read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They are indeed dry bones. Only the preaching of authentic doctrine can bring them together again.

You homeschoolers, however, have made your home next to living water. The garden of your spiritual life draws strength from authentic streams. Your soul is nourished by the Bread of Angels. Your faith is alive and well.

Nevertheless, Lent is a time to brush off the dust stirred up by complacency and lukewarmness. The true teaching and practice of the Catholic Faith will strengthen our backbone to teach our children to walk upright.

Yes, Lent is a time to say no to the easy way and to begin on the road less traveled. Let us use Lent wisely this year, for we know not the day nor the hour.

If you haven’t yet made a confession during Lent, then today is the day to do it. Hear now the word of the Lord.

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- Turn off the tube! TV provides entertainment that requires minimal response from the viewer. Most children will sit passively in front of the tube instead of playing outside, reading, or participating in family conversations. Reserve the TV for winter days when everyone has the flu; get up and move around the rest of the time.

- If you do choose to allow some television time, try to rent videos with some academic or literary value. Often students who watch a movie like *Gettysburg* will independently study the Civil War. Children who see *The Miracle Worker* might wish to learn more about Helen Keller. Several inspiring documentaries have been made about Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta.

One way to pep up your home schooling is to make regular trips to the public library and look for books that extend lessons in history, science or reading. A good place to find desirable titles is Seton's reading lists by grade (in the reading section of the lesson plans or in the "parent resources" section of the website). Generally if we recommend a title by a particular author, perhaps Lois Lenski or Robert McCloskey, other titles

by the same author are worth a look. Another rule of thumb is to look for books written before 1970 in unaltered editions, as forty years ago children's literature was uniformly wholesome. Check out the library's video and audio collection as well, as it might include some terrific music, art, science, or history selections. If you are not sure whether a particular item is appropriate, review it yourself before allowing the kids to watch or listen to it.

You can often jazz up your home schooling by calling local institutions, like museums, symphonies, county or state park departments, and local colleges. Explain that you are a home schooling family and ask if they have any educational programs they can offer you. Years ago, my children and I attended a program of Marian art at the Art Institute of Chicago. I was amazed by the first class paintings and sculptures, the excellent explanations for the children, and most especially, by the respect shown to the Blessed Mother by the speaker. See what your community has to offer.

Please remember that these activities are meant to enrich your children's education, not replace the books and lesson plans. Always weigh the time away from the classroom required by any outside activity against its educational benefit. Finally, pray to the Holy Family of Nazareth to guide you in your home schooling each and every day.

Conferences

April 14, Berlin, NJ (Philadelphia area). 8th Annual New Jersey Catholic Homeschool Conference, Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church, 261 Cross Keys Road. Saturday 8am Mass - 5pm. For information go to website www.chaplet.org.

April 20 and 21, Houston, TX. 17th Annual ARCH Book Fair and Speakers Conference, University of St Thomas, Jerabek Athletic Center on West Main Street (between Graustark and Yoakum), Houston. For information go to website www.arch-homeschool.org.

April 21, Harrisburg, PA. 13th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 6190 Allentown Blvd (Route 22 West), Harrisburg. Saturday 8:30am - 5pm. For information go to website www.catholichomeschoolpa.org.

April 27 and 28, West Allis, WI (Milwaukee area). "Celebrate the Faith" 2007 Catholic Homeschool Conference and Vendor Fair, Tommy G. Thompson Youth Center, 640 South 84th Street, West Allis. Friday 5pm - 9pm, Saturday 8am - 5pm. For information go to website www.gmche.com.

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Sacramentum Caritatis

The Eucharist and the Virgin Mary

From the relationship between the Eucharist and the individual sacraments, and from the eschatological significance of the sacred mysteries, the overall shape of the Christian life emerges, a life called at all times to be an act of spiritual worship, a self-offering pleasing to God. Although we are all still journeying towards the complete fulfilment of our hope, this does not mean that we cannot already gratefully acknowledge that God's gifts to us have found their perfect fulfilment in the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother. Mary's Assumption body and soul into heaven is for us a sign of sure hope, for it shows us, on our pilgrimage through time, the eschatological goal of which the sacrament of the Eucharist enables us even now to have a foretaste.

In Mary most holy, we also see perfectly fulfilled the "sacramental" way that God comes down to meet his creatures and involves them in his saving work. From the Annunciation to Pentecost, Mary of Nazareth appears as someone whose freedom is completely open to God's will. Her immaculate conception is revealed precisely in her unconditional docility to God's word. Obedient faith in response to God's work shapes her life at every moment. A virgin attentive to God's word, she lives in complete harmony with his will; she treasures in her heart the words that come to her from God and, piecing them together like a mosaic, she learns to understand them more deeply (cf. Lk 2:19, 51); Mary is the great Believer who places herself confidently in God's hands, abandoning

herself to his will. (102) This mystery deepens as she becomes completely involved in the redemptive mission of Jesus. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "the blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son until she stood at the Cross, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. Jn 19:25), suffering deeply with her only-begotten Son, associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim who was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus, dying on the Cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: 'Woman, behold your Son.'" (103) From the Annunciation to the Cross, Mary is the one who received the Word, made flesh within her and then silenced in death. It is she, lastly, who took into her arms the lifeless body of the one who truly loved his own "to the end" (Jn 13:1).

Consequently, every time we approach the Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharistic liturgy, we also turn to her who, by her complete fidelity, received Christ's sacrifice for the whole Church. The Synod Fathers rightly declared that "Mary inaugurates the Church's participation in the sacrifice of the Redeemer." (104) She is the Immaculata, who receives God's gift unconditionally and is thus associated with his work of salvation. Mary of Nazareth, icon of the nascent Church, is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of himself in the Eucharist.

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